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ABSTRACT

The needs of the clients of Australia's vocational education and training (VET) sector were examined in this report. Case studies of client groups in rural, urban, and metropolitan areas were also conducted. The client groups studied included: (1) enterprises (4 owners/managers or workplace experts/delegates per region); (2) industry (at least 1 industry training advisory board or technical and further education curriculum officer per state and one national officer); (3) individuals (at least 50 past students, approximately 50 current students, and 30 prospective VET students per industry); and (4) members of regional/community boards or governments. The study indicated that shifting to an enterprise focus when planning VET may be responsive to enterprises' needs but could potentially result in highly localized skill development rather than achievement of longer-term industry and individual goals. A model was proposed for determining the need for and implementation of VET that seeks to reconcile differences among industry, regions, and individuals and achieve mutuality of interests. The model called for focusing VET planning on occupations rather than industry. The bibliography lists 44 references. Appendixes constituting approximately 50% of the document contain case studies from the provincial center, rural region, and metropolitan region. (Contains 31 figures, 44 references, and 76 tables.)(MN)

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ED 469 570

Meeting the demand

The needs of vocational education and training clients

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Editor's note:

Data for this report have been sourced from many areas. Where possible, full reference details have been given. However, there are occasions when the data have been sourced from area consultative committees, development boards, institute reports compiling data from the graduate destination survey, etc. and these cannot be referenced to maintain anonymity.

An overview document to support this publication can be found on the web at http://www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj/nr7005.pdf

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Executive summary

The provision of vocational education and training (VET) is currently being focused upon demand-side needs in order to enhance relevance, quality and efficiency. Until recently, the demand-side was seen to comprise 'industry', the bi-partite spokespersons for enterprises and workers. Now enterprises have become the focus of demand-side needs. However, individual and regional interests also comprise the demand-side and have legitimate needs and interests.

Reconciling the needs of industry, enterprises, regions and individuals as key client groups is unlikely to be easy but it is essential since they all have legitimate needs and claims in demand-side reform. The research found some areas of commonality among all clients, areas of commonality between two groups and areas of difference.

Proposed here is a model for determining the need for and the implementation of VET that seeks to reconcile differences and achieve mutuality of interests. The model proposes a means for VET provision that is centred upon the concept of occupations and are de-centralised in terms of regional planning and the negotiation, determination and refinement of curriculum goals and content. In doing so, it seeks to secure elements of national uniformity at the occupational level while permitting important local provision of VET decision-making.

The findings point to broader roles for vocational educators and issues about the balance between competition and collaboration. In addition, strong evidence of the utility of TAFE provisions is advanced.

Key findings

Shift to an enterprise focus

A shift to an enterprise focus may be responsive to the needs of enterprises, particularly large enterprises, but has the potential to result in highly localised skill development rather than achievement of longer-term industry and individual goals.

In more detail, it was found that a shift to a focus on enterprise needs had happened or was occurring. This was more evident in the food processing sector than in the clerical sector.

Enterprises wanted this shift to:

- go further
- involve more negotiation with providers
- be enterprise driven
- retain national certification

Industry representatives were concerned about the:

- erosion of portable qualifications and industry goals
- specificity of course content and goals
- danger of fragmented curriculum
- potential for securing long-term goals of skilfulness

There is no evidence that simply placing an emphasis on enterprises will enhance the amount of and quality of VET provisions.

The evidence provided here suggests that an enterprise-focused approach may result in:

- low levels of course completion
- enterprise-specific curricula
- some individuals' career aspirations being frustrated
- few strategic concerns associated with a skilled workforce being met

Facilitation and support, as much as market-based provisions are likely to be required to assist enterprises with participation in VET and to establish a capacity to develop the skilfulness of workers in their workplaces.

Regional needs and planning

Meeting the uniqueness of regional needs will be best realised through regional planning.

In more detail, regional factors that have consequences for VET were identified, highlighting the uniqueness of each region's needs. These factors included:

- type of industries
- employment opportunities
- educational provisions
- demographic factors
- goals/needs and structures/identity

Each of these variables has particular consequences for vocational education.

The co-ordination of VET provisions was commonly seen by demand-side interests as a means to plan for and reconcile the needs of clients at the regional level.

Diverse values and goals for vocational education

The goals and values of the four client groups comprising the 'demand-side' of VET—industry, enterprises, regions and individuals—are diverse and will need to be reconciled in fulfilling the claims for VET to be addressing a demand-focused VET system.

In response to views about community service obligations (CSO), the balance between these and the market, and lifelong learning, it was evident that a diversity of values existed across the client groups. Assumptions about VET as a CSO were challenged, as was the belief about lifelong learning being associated with an individual's personal development. Instead, many responses referred to associations between CSOs and economic development and between lifelong learning and individuals' need to maintain their skill currency. Across the four client groups, diverse and sometimes contradictory values were evident. Moreover, some values suggested that assumptions about the rationale for vocational education might have changed in the need to meet economic imperatives.

Enterprise negotiation with VET providers

Enterprises wanted direct negotiation with VET providers. However, these negotiations would be largely founded on enterprise specific goals and not on establishing collaborative or strategic relationships with providers.

Most enterprises proposed direct negotiations with providers as being the best way to address their short-term and long-term VET needs. The purpose of these negotiations would be for providers to develop an intimate knowledge of enterprise needs in order to customise curriculum. There was little recognition from enterprises of the value of reciprocal arrangements that seek to understand constraints on providers. Despite calls for flexibility, enterprise needs of VET processes and outcomes were quite rigid; with calls to suit specific enterprise needs.

Additional enterprise expenditure on training

Additional expenditure by enterprises is most likely to be premised on organisational and legislative changes and evidence of a return on investment.

Changes to products or services were not frequently given as reasons for enhancing expenditure on training and up-skilling was held to be only required for wholesale change. Most enterprises reported little strategic planning in the development of their workforce. Those most likely to report strategic planning were in developmental phases of some kind.

Identifying client groups' needs

Client groups' needs exhibited both areas of commonality and difference.

Commonality across all groups was associated with:

- flexibility, relevance and currency of courses
- competence of teachers
- need for nationally accredited courses

Commonality between/among groups comprised:

- the need for appropriate infrastructure (industry and individuals)

- meeting individuals' needs (enterprises, regions and individuals)
- wider enterprise participation in VET and in particular by small business (industry and regions)
- improving business outcomes (enterprises and regions)
- realising individuals' employment and career goals (regions and individuals)

Differences included:

- Enterprises wanted outcomes tightly aligned to their activities and goals.
- Individuals wanted outcomes associated with employment, but not so specific as to inhibit career advancement or access to higher levels of education.
- Industry wanted outcomes associated with adherence to national core curriculum documentation and improvements in the amount of and quality of VET provisions.
- Regions wanted outcomes associated with the development of enterprises and individuals

Towards a model reconciling client groups' needs

A model reconciling the needs of the client groups is advanced which comprises decision-making that is both centred and de-centred. A key change is to conceptualise national focus within VET provisions upon 'occupations' rather than 'industry' (see section 4).

It is proposed that the basis for national coherence of vocational education provisions should change from a focus on 'industry' to one on occupations. Four reasons for considering this option are:

- separating curriculum practices from adversarial industrial relations environments
- providing coherence through vocations which reflect skilfulness (vocational knowledge), individuals' aspirations (career pathways within a vocation) and enterprises (access to relevant vocations)
- enhancing opportunities for collaborative and voluntary arrangements and associations premised on vocational activities
- providing flexibility for employment through vocational recognition

The change advanced here is to shift vocational education from an industrial to a professional focus of concern.

What follows outlines the four sets of client group interests as levels of input into curriculum deliberations.

Occupational level

From the above, it is proposed that occupations be used as an organising principle to reconcile VET clients' needs through the contributions of:

- an occupational basis for organising vocational education curricula stranding, negotiated at national and regional levels

- identification of broad educational intent (goals and aims)
- identification of recommended content
- identifying career pathways for and options within vocational education

Enterprise level

Enterprises want VET programs, which specifically meet their needs through:

- provision of vocationally-based courses, customised to approximate vocational activities within enterprises
- the negotiation/refinement of both content and outcomes
- support and facilitation to participate in VET and/or develop a capacity to provide quality 'in-house VET programs'

Regional level

Each region has different VET needs as well as furnishing contributions to curriculum planning and development. For regions, needs include:

- local planning
- local facilitation of courses to address the needs of local enterprises, groups of enterprises, and local VET providers
- tailoring of provisions to enterprise needs
- negotiation of content and refinement of outcomes

Individual level

Most individuals reported engaging in vocational education for employment-related reasons. However, these were usually more than just gaining employment. Often, they identified clear strategic goals for their participation in vocational education. From the findings, these individuals want:

- access to courses which retain national certification
- career pathways identified
- provisions which address local enterprise needs
- accessible and supportive teachers who address individual students' needs
- information about courses

The curriculum development process which aims to address and reconcile these needs comprises, at the national level, the identification of broad statements of intent (aims and goals) and recommended content. The statements of intent are refined further in the form of objectives at the local level where the suitability of content is also negotiated, as are considerations about how best this content can be taught and learnt. At this level, compensatory measures in either the educational institution or the workplace can be implemented to enrich experiences that would otherwise be inadequate. Equally, at this level the knowledge that is required but is difficult to learn can be identified and appropriate strategies can be adopted for learners to secure this knowledge.

Broader role for vocational educators

All client groups in addressing their needs advocated a broader set of roles for vocational educators.

These roles are:

- developer/consultant
- curriculum developer
- instructor
- advocate and supporter of learners
- policy developer

Vocational educators are required to play a wider, more diverse and complex role in meeting and reconciling the needs of the four client groups. This role should place teachers at the forefront of curriculum decision-making and leadership and will present novel challenges about the nature of professional practice. The preparedness of vocational educators is fundamental to the quality of vocational education provisions.

Competition or collaboration

It seems the market-based approach may address the needs of large enterprises and metropolitan communities, but little else. This seems particularly the case when 'thin markets' are in place, yet even rich markets may be uninterested in the needs of small enterprises. Regional initiatives that emphasise mutuality of needs between clusters of small enterprises engaged in the same vocational practice is and may further be a basis for meeting the needs of small and remote enterprises in a market-based system.

TAFE as the key provider

An unintended finding of this investigation was evidence from all four client groups praising the quality of TAFE provisions. The findings suggest that rather than seeking to place more pressure on TAFE provisions they should play an enhanced and more valued role in vocational education. TAFE seemed central to the maintenance and development of VET in non-metropolitan regions in particular.

1 The project

Overview

The investigation examined the requirements for vocational education within two industry sectors (food processing and clerical), in three regions (a metropolitan centre, a provincial centre and a remote rural centre), across four States.

The investigation found evidence of a shift to meet enterprise needs—in the form of an emphasis in provisions, and high levels of expectations by enterprises that these needs would be met. Both common and distinct needs were identified in the processes and outcomes of vocational education across the client groups. While the common needs led to mutuality among some or all of the four client groups, other needs were quite distinct and sometimes contradictory.

In an attempt to build upon the elements of mutuality and to reconcile differences, an approach to the organisation of vocational education is proposed that is characterised by levels of decision-making, input and processes. This approach proposes replacing 'industry' with 'vocation' as the national point of coherence for vocational education training (VET) provisions. In doing this, the attempt is to focus vocational education more upon a vocational than an industrial basis. The local regional level is proposed as the key circumstance for curriculum decision-making, with vocational educators playing an enhanced role in curriculum planning and implementation. Regional planning and input is also emphasised in this model.

In addition, the market approach to VET planning and course provisions is held as being unlikely to address all clients' needs, including those of enterprises that are small and remote. From these findings, views about reconciling the needs of VET client groups are advanced. However, not all these needs are readily reconcilable. The approach proposed here is to move away from the dominance of one client group, and the means of managing vocational education by mandation, regulation and control—which, by most measures, have been unable to meet best the needs of vocational education or its clients. Instead, wider involvement, a de-centred approach and one aiming for mutuality of interest is proposed.

The investigation reported here builds upon earlier work commissioned by the Office of Technical and Further Education in Victoria (Billett et al. 1997) which evaluated VET policy directions through an analysis of the contributions of recent research. This work identified emerging directions for VET, and the changing relationships among VET client groups and their emerging roles.

Many people reading the ideas in this report may consider them to be in part a fanciful departure from what has gone before. However, it has been demonstrated in the literature reviewed earlier, and in the analysis of the data gathered for this investigation, that existing measures are not serving vocational education or all of its clients well.

Context: Changing relationships within VET's client groups

The relationships among the key VET client groups of industry, enterprises, regions and individuals are currently changing. These changes foreshadow transformations in the foci of policy and practice within vocational education, which over the past decade has been dominated by addressing the needs of industry.

Industry is here defined as spokespersons for industry sectors designated by government. The spokespersons comprise those with bi-partite interests, and the agencies established to manage the industry-led provisions (for example, industry training advisory boards (ITABs), industry case-loaders within training systems). Arrangements to identify and meet this need were established in the late 1980s and early 1990s by the Labor government (Dawkins 1988), and were sustained by a social compact between unions and employers in 'the Accord'. Tripartite arrangements (government, employers and unions) were used to manage the industry-led provision of vocational education, premised on advice from peak 'industry' groups. Key goals for these groups included enhancing both the quantum and quality of industry training, and securing greater commitment and sponsorship of vocational education provisions by enterprises functioning under the 'industry' umbrella.

Moreover, these provisions were intended to be characterised by national uniformity. They were shaped by prescriptions of industry needs in the form of national competency standards and highly specified syllabi—which in most cases detailed the outcomes for and content of courses.

Characterised as being corporatist, centralised and top-down, these tripartite arrangements privileged the views and interests of 'industry', yet inhibited contributions from enterprises, teachers and other interests. Mandation, regulation and even legislation were used in attempts to secure key government policy objectives associated with the sponsorship of, and participation in, VET by industry (enterprises), and also responsiveness of the publicly funded VET systems (Billett et al. 1997). Mandated approaches for both the process and outcomes of vocational education were advanced, and regulations were used to manage the uniform implementation across States and Territories. Equally, legislative arrangements in the form of levies upon enterprises, and provisions within industrial agreements, were enacted to secure participation in VET.

However, it seems that this approach has failed to secure the important policy goals of enhancing both the level of participation in vocational education provisions and the quality of that provision. Indeed, the sponsorship of and participation by enterprises in VET programs is declining in both its quantum

and duration (Callus 1994; Guthrie & Barnett 1996; Misko 1996; State Training Board [STB] 1995, 1997).

Attempts to centralise curriculum development provisions are held to have eroded its responsiveness and its applicability to the enterprises where this knowledge is deployed (Billett 1996; Hager 1997; Yeung, Woolcock & Sullivan 1996). Moreover, business rejected the legislated contributions of enterprises for the development of their own staff. Furthermore, when industrial arrangements were liberated of the mandation to include training provisions, few felt compelled to continue with stating this provision in these agreements (Callus 1994; Guthrie & Barnett 1996; Misko 1996).

A shift from an industry to an enterprise focus

Now, with the end of 'the Accord' and the emergence of enterprise-based industrial arrangements has come the erosion of national industrial awards. This has led to a weakening of national initiatives in vocational education—such as core curriculum and national occupational standards that were aimed to be universally applicable.

Concurrently, the needs and demands of enterprises (particularly large enterprises) have emerged, whose unique requirements are becoming a focus of curriculum initiatives and practice in VET. Enterprises participating in VET are now favouring highly specific outcomes, rather than those that are more generally applicable to the industry to which they are aligned. Enterprises are the firms in which individuals are employed, entry-level training is usually sponsored and fee-for-service training can occur.

From this investigation, it is evident that enterprises are now demanding two levels of customisation for their courses:

1. vocational knowledge learnt is only that required by the enterprise
2. this knowledge needs to be embedded in the organisational structures of the workplace

Aggregating this factor to the current reduction in the quantum of enterprise-sponsored training, and an emerging preference for short duration entry-level training by enterprises, and significant questions emerge about the development and maintenance of a national base of skilled workers.

In this investigation, industry respondents expressed concerns about the erosion of national goals, of the quality of provisions and certification, and of strategic goals for the skill development for the industry. That is, short-term outcomes were seen to be now subjugating:

- the long term goals of maintaining a skilful industry workforce
- the aspirations of individuals who seek to realise their personal and professional goals through vocational education provisions

Legitimacy of regional needs

Alongside the changing relationships between enterprises and 'industry' are the emerging demands of regions to have their particular needs recognised and met in ways most suited to their requirements (Schofield & Associates 1996).

Regions are areas that have particular combinations of enterprises, demographic and other factors that indicate particular VET needs.

One feature of VET provisions within these regions has been the forging of strategic relationships between key enterprises and local technical and further education (TAFE) institutes. The significance of these arrangements is that curriculum negotiations are local rather than centralised. This decentring now seems possible, with the erosion of the centralist approaches to VET facilitated by, and giving voice to, the particular needs of regions, and the array of enterprises and interests that reside within them.

In this investigation, it was found that regions had quite different needs in terms of:

- the industry focus
- range of enterprises
- background and attributes of the individuals who accessed vocational education courses

Hence, the vocational education requirements of regions and communities are required to be:

- understood more fully
- met in ways commensurate with their needs
- probably planned for at a regional level

Centralised planning is unlikely to be sensitive enough to understand and account for the needs of regions (Schofield & Associates 1996). Market-based provisions may only succeed in addressing some needs while exacerbating others. It was also found that the most successful means of addressing regional needs will be through co-ordination, as neither the market-based approach nor consultation alone would be adequate.

Contributions and aspirations of individuals

Finally, individuals are now being acknowledged as a group who are making a significant contribution not only to their own development, but also to the nation's social and economic development (Chapman 1997).

Individuals are those who engage with the VET system typically as independent clients of the VET system, and—to a lesser degree—as enterprise-sponsored participants.

It is for these individuals—who are the key participants in VET—that the voices of industry and enterprises need to be mediated to address needs associated with individuals' personal and professional goals. These include career path options that transcend specific employment in particular enterprises.

It was found that there was a mismatch between the outcomes of vocational education programs desired by enterprises and those addressing individuals' needs.

Changing relationships, clients' needs and VET

These transforming relations and emerging demands represent significant challenges to policy and practice for the VET sector. It seems that curriculum provisions can no longer be fashioned with national industry-based uniformity as their primary concern, because enterprise needs—those of regions and individuals—cannot be accommodated under this basis.

Indeed, the recent 'training packages' approach adopted by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) emphasises this transformation, placing a clearly situated focus upon the development of VET curriculum. In doing so, this initiative focuses upon fashioning curriculum responses at the local level, in ways that will be most suited to the needs of the particular enterprises or regions.

This approach to curriculum development practice suggests a need to negotiate situational factors associated with enterprise, individual and regional needs. These needs were expressed in the findings on the role of vocational education that emphasised their role in negotiating, developing, implementing and evaluating curriculum provisions at the regional level. It also advances an important role for VET educators in educational decision-making.

However, there are inherent problems with wholly enterprise-based or highly situational curriculum approaches which are likely to lead to more specialised and specific outcomes (Billett et al. 1997). There are consequences for the career pathways of individuals employed in enterprises, as well as for the skilfulness of the regional, State and national workforce. As evidenced in the United Kingdom, these problems are no more likely than when they are accompanied by high levels of market-based deregulation.

Therefore, rather than a highly deregulated VET system which uses the market rather than planning processes, it seems necessary to understand how best to offer a platform for VET which embraces and reconciles the needs of these client groups. This platform should aim to balance:

- market-based reforms
- situational curriculum responses
- strategic goals for the skilfulness of the individuals who comprise the nation's workforce

Such a view suggests a different basis for organising the national focus. The change is from industry to occupation. That is a voice that speaks on behalf of the occupational activities of the vocation, for enterprises who utilise that vocation, and for those individuals who are seeking a vocational identity and career progression within a vocation.

Importantly, it is also suggested that a mature VET system needs to be founded on mutuality among the different needs of its client groups. This may seem a difficult goal but it is one worth pursuing.

The findings indicated that a simple shift from an 'industry' focus to an 'enterprise' focus is likely to frustrate the needs of the three other client groups. It is also likely to have long term consequences for the quantum and quality of skilfulness, probably exclude small and/or remote enterprises, and ignore, in particular, the significant contributions of the individuals who participate in and wish to realise their vocational aspirations through vocational education provisions.

Changing relationships and emerging roles: A synthesis

In an earlier analysis of VET policy (Billett et al. 1997), it was proposed that for each of the client groups there was a desired transformation in their role. There was also a series of factors identified in the recent literature, which supports each of these 'broad brush' transformations, and subsequent emerging foci for policy and practice. Below, these are presented by client group.

These changing relationships and emerging key foci were used to frame the investigation reported here. It aimed to determine the degree to which these emerging relationships and changing roles, and their mutuality, are valid and sustainable in seeking to enhance participation, sponsorship and quality of curriculum practice within the nation's VET system in the next decade.
In chapter 4, these transformations are used to facilitate discussion about how the needs of each client group are likely to be achieved.

Individuals

Transformation from individuals as economic units, to individuals as aspirants with personal and professional goals.

Factors:

- greater focus on individuals (e.g. user pays, user choice, open market, flexible delivery, fees)
- individuals as lifelong learners (e.g. learning, change, development of career transformation and pathways in enterprises, changing patterns of participation in the workforce)
- individuals as key contributors to economic development through their personal investment and commitment to VET
- individuals as clients requiring different levels of need (e.g. access, age, ethnicity, gender, disability)
- individuals as career aspirants not workers (e.g. personal goals of development associated with progression through a career, not just a job)
- individuals as meaning-makers (e.g. individuals learn, not organisations; learning is not uniform but idiosyncratic and mediated by the workplace and community, etc.)

- individuals as the focus of educational provisions (e.g. flexible delivery, managing disability, user choice and pays, participation patterns in adult, community and vocational education)
- individuals wanting transferable knowledge (e.g. curriculum provisions are required which permit transfer—or ameliorate for—enterprise or institutional specific outcomes).

Emerging key foci:

- arrangements for individual aspirations which have both industry and enterprise dimensions addressed at a particular workplace or provider institution
- pathways for individuals and a focus on careers

Enterprises

Transformation from a fittedness with 'industry' mandation and regulation, to acknowledging a fittedness with their own unique requirements within an industry framework.

Factors:

- enterprises as a focus of work practice (e.g. enterprise bargaining, activity systems, local and regional factors, enterprises employ, not industry)
- enterprise focus of vocational outcomes (e.g. specific requirements require translating into curriculum factors and goals)
- enterprises as a site for realising individual career aspirations
- vocational practice embedded in particular workplaces (e.g. vocational activities within an industry sector are unique to the enterprise conducting that practice, the move from dis-embedded notions of 'industry' to actual practice in communities)
- expertise is situated in workplace activity (e.g. expertise being defined by the workplace, enterprise focus for curriculum intents and activities)
- situatedness of learning (e.g. learning is influenced by the circumstances in which individuals engage in goal directed activity)

Emerging key foci:

- having training needs identified and realised by local providers
- strategic alliances between local enterprises and local providers
- development of specific curriculum arrangements (goals, processes, etc., established at local level)
- broadly stated industry provided goals transformed at the particular enterprise to develop more specific outcomes

Regions

The transformation from national and State-based priorities to negotiated regional priorities.

Factors:

- regional needs are not uniform (e.g. differentiated social and economic goals (from regeneration to development), differences in demographic factors, differences in requirements of and balance across adult, continuing, and vocational education)
- regions as a focus of collective social needs (e.g. diversity of individual, community, enterprise needs)
- regions as centres but not always de-centred (e.g. all areas are regions, albeit the city centre or remote district)
- market-based approaches may not be universally useful or applicable across all communities
- economic structures dependant on regional factors (e.g. availability of skilled labour, access, educational infrastructure)
- community has meaning within regions (e.g. understanding and addressing community needs cannot be undertaken in a distant and top-down fashion)

Emerging key foci:

- greater regional planning and reaction-based arrangement undertaken in conjunction with local training providers (e.g. TAFE institutes)
- responsiveness to changing demands at the regional level
- accreditation processes localised—focusing on processes of learning as much as infrastructure requirements and pre-specified outcomes

Enterprises

The transformation from centralised prescription, mandation and control to facilitating individual, regional, State and national industry aspirations.

Factors:

- move from centralised industrial awards and national core curriculum (e.g. enterprise bargaining, failure of highly national standards to account for actual workplace practice)
- decentring (e.g. inadequacies and undesirability of national prescriptions, softening of industry boundaries)
- enterprise-based and/or provider embedded priorities rather than dis-embedded industry outcomes
- needless burden of the structures of accountability (e.g. accreditation and curriculum prescriptions which are dis-embedded—i.e. remote from actual practice)
- move from curriculum accreditation arrangements based on prescription to enterprise/provider ability, towards secure knowledge required by individuals and enterprises

Emerging key foci:

- responsibility for the provisions of broad curriculum goals which are relevant for the industry, but not so prescriptive that enterprise or regional needs cannot be addressed

- maintaining career pathways for industry aspirants
- developing and promoting the industry profile

Research questions

The key question emerging from this initial discussion, and which is used to guide the research design and analysis of the data, is as follows:

What are the policy and practice implications for VET arising from the changing relationships among industry, enterprises, communities and individuals?

Sub-questions associated with this question are:

What are the likely changes in these relationships, and how will they transform advice and planning for vocational education provisions, and influence curriculum practice in VET?

How will these changing relationships transform the role of national and State training authorities?

What shift in values is required for enterprises to participate voluntarily in VET provisions at higher levels?

How best can curriculum development, implementation and evaluation processes be conceived for the emerging de-centred approach to VET?

How best can national and State-based goals for a skilled workforce be reconciled with the specific and specialised needs of enterprises?

What are the roles of vocational educators in responding to these emerging needs?

Overview of methodology

As detailed in chapter 2, the methodology comprised an investigation of two fields of vocational activity (food processing and clerical industry) in three regions throughout Australia. The intention was to capture the complex of factors which influence how best VET provisions can be implemented. As stated above, the basis for these factors are the needs and requirements of the key VET client groups.

The investigation comprised five phases

- Phase 1: Identifying and accessing the fields
- Phase 2: Mapping the fields
- Phase 3: Identifying transformations and consequences for VET policy and practice
- Phase 4: Refining the analysis with key VET client groups
- Phase 5: Finalising the report

Phase 1: Identifying and accessing the fields
Initially, two sectors of vocational activity were identified. The choice of these sectors was guided by a need to capture both existing and emerging sectoral

needs. To address this requirement, a sector with existing programs in the VET system (e.g. clerical work), and an emerging sector (e.g. food processing) were chosen. In addition, regions that reflect both diversity but have some national applicability were identified. These were:

- a metropolitan or near metropolitan region
- a provincial centre
- a remote rural setting

Key informants from each of the client groups (individuals, regions, enterprises, and industry) were identified and contacted within the three regions. To facilitate the process of data-gathering, the investigation required support within the three regions. Hence, regional co-ordinators were established for each region to facilitate the gathering and refining of data.

Phase 2: Mapping the fields
Interviews and focus groups were used to gather data from representatives of key client groups in the three regions. Interview techniques that enhanced the validity of the verbal data were used for enterprise, industry and regional informants. Focus groups were also used—with informants representing prospective, current and past students—as were surveys. The questions focused upon the needs of each group and relationships with the needs of other client groups. The interviews attempted to map an understanding of the client groups in the regions.

Phase 3: Identifying transformations and consequences for VET policy and practice
An initial analysis of the data was undertaken, and a set of issues, consequences, likely scenarios, and tentative recommendations was generated in the form of case studies from each of the three regions. The analysis used the framework that had been advanced in the earlier study. Additional studies were drawn upon at this stage to inform the deliberations. In particular, the ANTA-funded TAFE Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) was used to furnish data on the views of students who had attended TAFE institutes in the three regions.

Phase 4: Refining the analysis with key VET client groups
The case studies developed in phase 3 were returned to representatives of the key client groups in the three regions, to gauge their responses and refine the findings. The refined case studies are to be found in the appendix.

Phase 5: Finalising the report
From these deliberations the main report was finalised.

Overview of findings

The findings are detailed in chapter 4. However, in point form, the key findings of the investigation are summarised below.

Shift to an enterprise focus

Evidence was provided by both industry and enterprise informants that a shift to a focus on enterprise needs had occurred or was now occurring. This was more evident in the food processing than the clerical sector.

Concerns arising about this shift from enterprises included the need for it to:

- go further
- involve more negotiation with providers
- be enterprise driven
- retain national qualifications

Concerns by industry representatives included:

- the erosion of portable qualifications and industry goals
- specificity of course content and goals
- the danger of fragmented curriculum
- the potential for short-term goals

However, there is little evidence—either here or elsewhere—that simply placing an emphasis on enterprises will enhance the quantum and quality of VET provisions.

The evidence furnished here holds that an enterprise-focused approach will result in:

- low levels of course completion
- enterprise specific curricula
- individuals' career aspirations being frustrated
- little in the way of strategic concerns associated with a skilled workforce being met

Rather, it seems that facilitation and support, rather than market-based provisions, are required to assist enterprise with participation in VET, and in establishing a capacity to develop the skilfulness of workers in their workplaces.

VET planning: Regional co-ordination

Regional planning was commonly seen as a means to reconcile clients' needs. A set of factors was identified that needed to be accounted for in planning. It was determined that rather than consultation or sectoral interests (market forces), regional co-ordination was the most likely mechanism to provide a reconciliation between the needs of client groups. It was found that this would permit local expertise in vocational education to become part of that process, while avoiding the conflicts brought about by the need of providers to compete in the market place. In each region, there were identifiable agencies which could be used as a platform for regional planning for VET.

Broader role for vocational educators

All client groups proposed a broader set of roles for vocational educators in addressing their needs. These roles are:

- consultant
- curriculum developer
- instructor
- advocate and supporter of learners
- policy developer

These roles go beyond those of being an implementer of curriculum developed by 'industry'—which was the role of educators under industry-mandated arrangements. The roles of *consultant* and *curriculum developer* were closely associated with addressing enterprises' needs. However, there were conflicts between these roles being advocates for enterprises, on the one hand, and individuals, on the other, that may not be readily reconcilable.

It is clear is that vocational educators are required to play a wider, more diverse and complex role in meeting and reconciling the needs of the four client groups. While this role will place teachers in the forefront of curriculum decision-making and leadership, it will also present novel challenges concerning the nature of professional practice. It would seem that, more than ever, the preparedness of vocational educators will be fundamental to the quality of vocational education provisions.

Diverse values, associated goals for, and provisions of, vocational education

In response to views about community service obligations (CSO), the balance between these and the market, and lifelong learning, it was evident that a diversity of values exists across the client groups. Assumptions about VET as a CSO were challenged, as was the belief about lifelong learning being associated with an individual's personal development. Instead, many of the responses referred to associations between CSOs and economic development, and between lifelong learning and individuals' need to maintain their skill currency. So, across the four client groups, diverse and sometimes contradictory values were evident. Moreover, some of those values suggest that assumptions about the rationale for vocational education may have changed in the need to meet economic imperatives.

Enterprise negotiation with providers

To best address short-term and long-term enterprise needs, it was proposed by enterprise informants that direct negotiation with providers is required. These negotiations should focus upon providers developing an intimate knowledge of enterprise needs to customise curriculum. However, there was little acknowledgement of the value of reciprocal arrangements. Despite the claims for flexibility, enterprise needs of VET processes and outcomes tended to be quite rigid: they wanted them to suit their specific needs.

Additional enterprise expenditure on training

Enterprise representatives proposed the most likely motivation for additional expenditure on training by their enterprises would be forthcoming mainly as a result of:

- organisational restructure
- legislative/legislated changes
- evidence that a productive outcome would result

Changes to products or services were usually denied as a reason to enhance expenditure on training, and up-skilling was held to be required only for wholesale change. Many enterprises reported little in the way of long term strategic planning in the development of their workforce. Those most likely to report this were in developmental phases of some kind.

Variables with regional needs identified

A complex of factors emerged as variables that made each region's needs different. These variables included:

- type of industries (scope, specialisation)
- employment opportunities (types, modes, scope)
- educational provisions (scope, access, modes, relationships)
- demographic factors (age, ethnicity, language, educational achievement, size, etc.)
- goals/needs (development, consolidation, variation/diversity)
- regional structures/identity (visibility, opaqueness, identity)

Each of these variables has particular consequences for vocational education provisions, in terms of the:

- types of programs to be offered
- levels and specialisation of those programs
- types of students who will access these courses, and under what circumstances

Reconciling clients' needs

From a synthesis of the findings on client groups' needs, areas of commonality and difference were identifiable.

Commonality of responses across all groups was associated with the:

- flexibility, relevance and currency of courses
- competence of teachers
- need for nationally accredited courses

Commonality between/among client groups comprises:

- industry and students—need for appropriate infrastructure
- enterprises, community and students—meeting individuals' needs
- industry and communities—wider enterprise participation in VET, particularly by small business
- enterprises and community—improving business outcomes
- community and students—realising individuals' employment and career goals

Difference(s) between/among client groups comprises:

- outcomes
- enterprises—want outcomes tightly aligned to their activities and goals (two levels of customisation)

- students—want outcomes that are associated with employment (but not so specific that they inhibit career advancement), movement to other enterprises or access to higher levels of education
- industry—wants outcomes associated with adherence to national curriculum, and enhancements in the quantum and quality of VET provisions
- regions—want outcomes associated with both enterprises' and individuals' progress

So enterprises are, not surprisingly, concerned with employability and skill utilisation in their workplaces. Conversely, students want outcomes that transcend this specific goal, and see them positioned for careers rather than for a specific job. Industry wants adherence to hard-negotiated national industry frameworks. Consequently, there are both common and different goals across the client groups.

Given the importance of goals in establishing curriculum, it would seem that some reconciliation is required to address all clients needs.

Towards a model reconciling client needs

There is a case for changing the overall basis of the national coherence of vocational education provisions. It is suggested here that the change from a focus on industry, to one on vocations is required. There seem to be four reasons for considering this option:

1 Separating curriculum practices from now-defunct industrial classifications removes these provisions from decision-makers whose interests are usually vested elsewhere (industrial relations), and which probably never best served the interests of vocational education.
2 Coherence will be provided for VET provisions through occupations which reflect skilfulness (vocational knowledge), individuals' aspirations (career pathways within a vocation) and enterprises (access to relevant vocations).
3 This option will enhance opportunities for collaborative and voluntary arrangements, and associations which emphasise the importance of vocational activities (professional practice)—rather than adherence to an industrial prescription mandated by legislation and regulation that has failed to secure a commitment to VET.
4 Enhanced flexibility will be provided for the recognition of the same vocation within enterprises that either wholly, or almost wholly, comprise that occupation—or those where many occupations are required, each with their own specialisation.

So, the change suggested here is to take vocational education from an industrial to a professional environment.

There is little evidence to suggest that embedding vocational education within the industrial relations environment has done much to advance the cause of vocational education and the needs of all client groups. Although, in earlier

times, the coercive measures of obligatory award provisions may have stimulated some initial commitment to vocational education, recent experience indicates that this interest has dissipated. It seems that the regulated approach, as the sole means, has not been successful in securing the needs of enterprise commitment or participation.

From this, and the analysis of the findings, it is proposed that the 'industry' (occupational) role in reconciling VET clients' needs can be through the following types of contributions:

- a vocational (occupational) basis for organising vocational education curricula
- stranding negotiated at national and regional levels
- negotiation of non-specific educational intent (goals and aims)
- negotiation of occupationally appropriate content as a basis for choice
- facilitation and support for enterprises to participate in VET and/or organise it for their own workplace

Enterprises

Enterprises want VET programs that specifically meet their needs. Many of the enterprises hold this as a right and a benchmark by which VET provisions are to be valued.

It seems that enterprise needs can be addressed through the following, using means that are also reconcilable with the needs of individuals and industry (occupations):

- provisions of occupationally-based strands, where appropriate, that approximate vocational activities within enterprises
- the negotiation/refinement of both content and outcomes (If the occupational content is focused but open to negotiation, and the occupational intents permit the objectives to be addressed at the enterprise levels, then this may permit their needs to be recognised. Moreover, processes of implementation favour instructional techniques likely to develop robust occupational knowledge.)
- support and facilitation for enterprises to participate in VET or develop a capacity to provide quality 'in-house VET programs'

Regions

The findings in chapters 3 and 4 indicate that different regions have different needs for VET. These needs are unlikely to be fully understood except by deliberately taking account of those needs, probably from within the region itself. From the findings, the requirement for a regional contribution to curriculum planning and development for regions needs include:

- local (regional) planning
- local facilitation of courses to address the needs of:
  - local enterprises
  - groups of enterprises
  - local VET providers
  - tailoring of provisions to enterprise needs
  - negotiation of content and refinement of outcomes

Individuals

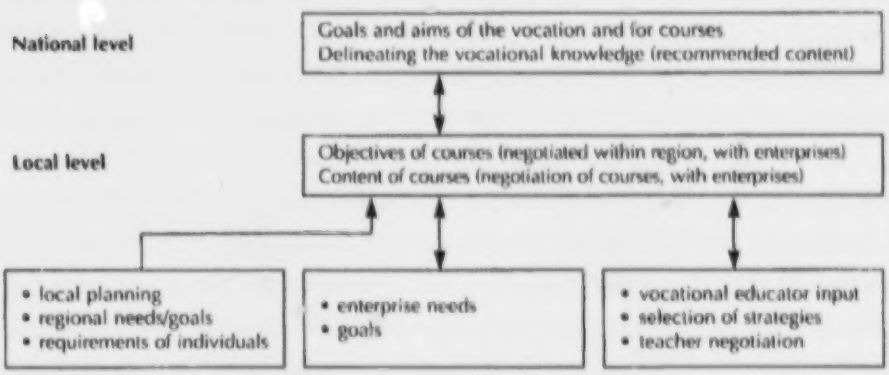
Although the vast majority of students (prospective, current and past) reported engaging in vocational education for employment-related reasons, those reasons were usually more than just to gain employment. Often, individuals were able to identify strategic goals for their participation in vocational education.

From these data, individuals were identified as wanting accessible, flexible provisions that are relevant to enterprises, but have both goals and processes that permit their personal or vocational aspirations to be realised. Consequently, the requirements advanced here can be seen as follows. Individuals want:

- access to course which retain national certification
- career pathways identified
- provisions which address local enterprise needs
- accessible and supportive teachers who address individual students' needs

Although detailed in chapter 4, figure 1.1 depicts the curriculum development process that aims to address the needs identified above.

Figure 1.1: Reconciling needs within vocational education


National level
Goals and aims of the vocation and for courses
Delineating the vocational knowledge (recommended content)
Local level
Objectives of courses (negotiated within region, with enterprises)
Content of courses (negotiation of courses, with enterprises)
• local planning
• regional needs/goals
• requirements of individuals
• enterprise needs
• goals
• vocational educator input
• selection of strategies
• teacher negotiation

At the national level, broad statements of intent (aims and goals) are identified, as are recommended content. While the statements of intent are refined further in the form of objectives at the local level, the suitability of content is also negotiated. Consideration is required at this level about how best this content can be taught and learnt, and in what circumstances (combinations of on- and off-job). At this level, compensatory measures can be implemented to enrich experiences that will be inadequate in either the educational institution or the workplace. Equally, at this level the knowledge that is required but is difficult to learn can be identified, and appropriate strategies adopted for learners to secure this knowledge.

Competition or collaboration

It seems that the market-based approach may address the needs of large enterprises and metropolitan communities, but little else. Regional initiatives—

which emphasise mutuality of needs between clusters of small enterprises engaged in the same vocational practice—are, and may further be, a basis for meeting the needs of small and remote enterprises in a market-based system.

TAFE as the key provider

An unintended outcome of this investigation was evidence from all four client groups which praised the quality of TAFE provisions. The findings here suggest that rather than seeking to place more pressure on TAFE provisions, they should play an enhanced and more valued role in vocational education provisions.

These provisions seemed central to the maintenance and development of VET in non–metropolitan regions in particular.

2 Method

Introduction

This chapter details the data-gathering and analysis for this project. It outlines the research design, details the steps in the empirical work, and describes how the analysis of the data was conducted.

This investigation aims to determine the degree to which emerging relationships and changing roles within the VET client groups of industry, enterprises, regions and individuals exist currently, or in prospect. In particular, it appraises the prospect of securing mutuality in the client groups' needs and interests. It is held that such an approach is likely to:

- enhance participation in, and sponsorship of, VET
- afford measures to improve the quality of curriculum practice within the nation's VET system in the next decade

The proposition examined in this project is that, for vocational education and training curriculum provisions to be effective, they will likely need to accommodate the needs of:

- the *industry* for which the VET curriculum is being targeted
- *enterprises* within that industry sector or associated with it
- *individuals*, who are engaged, or are in the prospect of being engaged, in that vocational area
- the *community/region* in which the VET program is being enacted

It has been proposed that the four client groups' needs, and hence their goals for curriculum and needs for VET provisions, are likely to be quite different (Billett et al. 1997). For example, industry representatives might be concerned with the long term viability of the industry or its strategic development—ensuring an adequate supply of appropriately skilled workers—whereas an enterprise respondent might be more concerned with the particular combination and levels of skills required for its profitability. Individuals working (or wishing to work) in the industry might be concerned about portability within their industry or across industry sectors. Finally, regional needs might reflect a particular combination of needs and concerns which transcend those of the three other client groups.

It is also proposed that mutuality among the interests of these client groups is most likely to lead to a VET system that is mature and responsive to the needs of the four groups.

Consequently, this investigation seeks to determine:

- the substance of these propositions, through an investigation of how the goals and needs of these client groups are currently being addressed
- how best these needs might be addressed in the future
- the character of mutuality among these different interests

The project is about determining whether the predictions advanced in a review of literature (Billett et al. 1997) can be upheld, how best can the needs of these client groups be realised, and what these findings mean for VET policy and practice.

Research questions

As stated in chapter 1, the key question that guides this investigation is:

What are the policy and practice implications for VET arising from the changing relationships among industry, enterprises, communities and individuals?

Sub–questions associated with this question are:

What are the likely changes in these relationships, and how will this transform advice and planning for vocational education provisions and influence curriculum practice in VET?

How will these changing relationships transform the role of national and State training authorities?

What shift in values is required for enterprises to participate voluntarily in VET provisions at higher levels?

How best can curriculum development, implementation and evaluation processes be conceived for the emerging de-centred approach to VET?

How best can national and State-based goals for a skilled workforce be reconciled with the specific and specialised needs of enterprises?

What are the roles of vocational educators in responding to these emerging needs?

The research design comprises an investigation of two fields of vocational activity (food processing and clerical work) in three regions, to capture the complex of factors which influence how best VET provisions can be implemented. As stated above, the basis for these factors are the needs and requirements of the key VET client groups.

The research design

The research design comprises five phases:

- Phase 1: Identifying and accessing the fields
- Phase 2: Mapping the fields
- Phase 3: Identifying transformations and consequences for VET policy and practice

- Phase 4: Refining the analysis with key VET client groups
- Phase 5: Finalising the report

Phase 1: Identifying and accessing the fields

Choice of industry sectors

Two sectors of vocational activity were identified initially. The choice of sectors reflected a desire to capture two industries that were distinct in a number of ways—to provide some diversity.

Firstly, it was necessary to identify two industries that were embedded in different ways. Some industries enjoy a strong presence in the publicly funded vocational education system, whereas others are on the periphery of the system. These industries enjoy quite a different relationship with the VET system—founded on quite different premises—than those industries for whom there is a relationship premised on a community service kind of obligation. Hence, it is important to capture both existing and emerging sectoral needs. For instance, a sector that has existing programs in the VET system (e.g. clerical) is compared with an emerging sector (e.g. food processing). Second, it was useful to capture the requirements of industries which have different types of structure.

The two selected industries—clerical and food processing—fit these requirements.

The clerical industry has long had its needs addressed in the publicly funded TAFE system—although in recent times vocational provisions for the clerical industry have also been secured by private providers. Food processing—although a major industry—remains peripheral to the mainstream VET system, with much of the course provisions being undertaken in the workplace.

The structure of these two industries is quite different. Food processing is delineated by specialist streams of work (e.g. dairy foods, viticulture, meat), which are often quite different from each other, although categorised under a common industry categorisation. Alternatively, clerical work is really a service to a range of industries, providing a set of services and skills for those industries. Therefore, the two industries have quite different industry structures.

Selection of regions

Because regions are proposed as one of the four client groups of a VET system, it seemed appropriate to organise data-gathering on a regional basis. The regions were selected to provide diversity in needs and some national applicability. Taking the first requirement, it was important to identify and access:

- a metropolitan or near metropolitan region
- a provincial centre
- a rural or provincial rural setting

Having considered options available in States and Territories, and negotiated alignments of industry presence, three regions which have these characteristics were selected. For the sake of anonymity, the identity of the three regions has been hidden.

Selection of subjects

Subjects for the data-gathering comprised key client groups (community representatives, students, enterprises and industry representatives) within each of the regions.

It is worth briefly defining these client groups—particularly as the first two are often referred to synonymously, when in fact they are quite different.

Industry is defined as the spokespersons for an industry sector, who are usually bi-partite, and who claim to speak for both the employers and employees within the industry sector. Industry does not directly sponsor training or employ—rather, they provide advice and guidance for the sector (e.g. ITABs).

Enterprises are the firms in which individuals are employed, where entry-level training is sponsored, and fee-for-service training can occur. Enterprises are seen to sit within categories of industry sectors, although in some cases vocational activities (e.g. clerical work) transcend industry sectors.

Regions/communities are areas that have particular combinations of enterprises, and demographic and other factors that indicate particular vocational education and training needs. The concept of community enjoys an array of definitions. Here, the idea of a *locale* is used: a geographical area in which there are different communities identifiable by their values, interests and norms.

Individuals are those who engage with the VET system, typically as independent clients of the VET system, and to a lesser degree as enterprise-sponsored participants.

Table 2.1: List of subjects per region

Enterprises
Owners/managers, workplace experts/delegates (five interviews per industry)
Industry
ITABs, TAFE curriculum officers (at least one per State and national)
Individuals
Past students, approximately 50 per industry plus small focus group (five persons)
Existing students, approximately 50 per industry plus small focus group (five persons)
Intending students, at least 30 per industry plus small focus group (five persons)
Regions/communities
Regional development boards, chambers of commerce, local government
Representatives of indigenous, ethnic groups (at least two to three interviews per region)
Trainers' networks, Employment National officers, VET-in-schools co-ordinators (at least five to six per region)

To facilitate identification of subjects, their contact and data-gathering opportunities in each region, regional co-ordinators were identified and selected for the project. Without the significant support received from within these regions, it is unlikely the investigation would have been as successful.

In each region, representatives from the four client groups were then identified.

Phase 2: Mapping the fields

Data-gathering

There were descriptive and predictive dimensions to the data-gathering, its analysis and synthesis.

Descriptive data were gathered to inform about the current circumstance, 'what is'. Through interviews, focus groups and questionnaires, data were gathered that furnished perspectives about how the needs of the four key client groups were currently (and in the recent past) being met.

Predictive data were gathered to inform about 'what should be', from the particular perspectives of the client group or views within the client group (see table 2.2). These data, gathered in the same ways as the descriptive data, were used to inform views on what arrangements should be in place to meet these needs and to achieve mutuality among the differing interests of the key client groups. Although focused upon the same questions and issues, data were gathered in different ways across the client groups. This situation arose from the need to reflect the particular interest or ability of the subjects to inform from the particular key client group. For example, it was deemed unhelpful to ask prospective students about how their interests can be reconciled with those of the enterprise that will be their employer, and the industry in which they would like to work. However, these questions could reasonably be asked of a former student or employer or industry representative.

Interviews were used extensively, as was the gathering of data through questionnaires. There is the inevitable problem with the validation of data gathered in this way. Hence, to support responses provided through interview schedules, subjects were asked to provide instances in order to validate their contentions. Also, in addition to verbal data from interviews, some categories of subjects were asked to array and prioritise concepts associated with VET provisions and content areas, in order to elicit data for comparison across enterprises and sites. These items aimed to capture the particular needs and interests of client groups in particular ways.

As with the types of data gathered, the focus was tighter with the data-gathering for some client groups (e.g. enterprises and industry) than for others (e.g. regions). However, in all cases, participants were pressed for substantiation of both descriptive and predictive views.

Table 2.2: Client groups, subjects and data-gathering means

Enterprises (food processing and clerical) Owners, union delegates, experts (interviews) (Small, medium and large enterprises)	**Industry (food processing and clerical)** • ITABs (interviews) • TAFE curriculum officers (interviews) • ANTA staff (interviews)
Regions/communities • Regional development boards (interviews) • Trainers networks (interviews) • VET-in-schools co-ordinators (interviews) • Chamber of commerce (interviews) • Local government (interviews) • Representatives of indigenous, ethnic and any marginalised groups • Access to regional skills audit, regional development report/strategy • DETAFE regional consultation • DETYA area consultative councils	**Individuals** • Past students of courses (focus groups and questionnaires) • Prospective students of courses (focus groups and questionnaires) • Present students enrolled in courses (focus groups and questionnaires) • Unemployed • Employment National officers (regions) (focus groups and questionnaires) • VET in schools co-ordinators (interviews)

The questions used in the data-gathering methods were synthesised from the recent work (Billett, Cooper, Hayes & Parker 1997) commissioned by the Office of Training and Further Education (OTFE), which was the genesis of this investigation.

Issues such as access to vocational education provisions, the role of markets, and desired outcomes from participation in VET, formed the focus of the items to be discussed at interviews and through focus groups.

A schedule of questions was developed for the interviews, focus groups and surveys, aiming to elicit data from the different categories of subjects, which, when aggregated, would address consistent issues (see table 2.3). These items focused on the needs and aspirations of each client group, and their respective relationships with the needs of other client groups. In addition, items associated with key policy initiatives (e.g. participation and the market, lifelong learning) were used. In particular, the *actual* client groups were accessed, avoiding, wherever possible, those who claimed to speak on behalf of others.

Table 2.3: Determining client groups' goals and needs: descriptive and predictive

Client	Items
Enterprises Who: • Owners, union delegates, experts What issues: • Needs of enterprises reflected by curriculum provisions, content, method and administrative arrangements • What is happening and what needs to happen	**Descriptive data** What do you see as the key skill development needs of your enterprise? What does it mean to be an expert (food processor/ clerical worker) in this enterprise? In what ways do the existing courses address these needs? In what ways do the existing courses fail to address these needs? What are the most successful outcomes of the current curriculum in preparing workers for this enterprise? Why are these successful? What do you understand by the concept of lifelong learning? What, if anything, does the concept of lifelong mean for this enterprise?

Client	Items
Enterprises cont. Modes: • Interviews • Concepts—content • Concepts—curriculum • List of curriculum concepts, prioritised • List of workplace tasks from the syllabus or brainstorm (sequence of tasks required to be learnt)	**Predictive data** What should the term 'a quality VET provision' mean for this enterprise? How should the existing provision of VET be changed to address the needs of this enterprise? What changes need to occur for this enterprise to invest more in the training of its employees? It has been proposed that there is a shift away from industry-based VET provisions to the those which address enterprises. In what ways do you see this happening? What are the likely effects? How can the needs of your industry, the needs of the local community and individuals be managed, as well as this enterprise? How could this enterprise best negotiate curriculum content and means of provision? What characteristics of partnerships with providers of VET would encourage you to participate in such a partnership? What role do you see for vocational educators in addressing this enterprise needs?
Industry Who: • ITABs • TAFE curriculum officers What issues: • Needs of industry reflected by curriculum provisions, content method, administrative arrangements • What is happening and what needs to happen Modes: • Interviews • Concepts—content • Concepts—curriculum • List of curriculum concepts, prioritised	**Descriptive data** What do you see as the VET needs for your industry? In what ways do the existing courses address the needs of your industry? In what ways are the existing VET provision failing to address the needs of this industry? What are the most important outcomes of the VET curriculum for your industry? Are the needs of enterprises, individuals and regions being addressed in the planning of VET provisions for your industry? How? What do you understand by the concept of lifelong learning? In what way is the concept of lifelong learning addressed in your curriculum provision? In what ways does the existing curriculum offer pathways for learners' career progression? What is being done to maintain/develop the skill base of your industry? **Predictive data** What should the term 'a quality VET provision' mean from an industry perspective? It has been proposed that there is a shift away from industry-based VET provisions to those which address the enterprise. In what ways do you see this happening? What are the likely effects? Putting current policy aside, what should ideally be done to effectively address the needs of your industry through VET? How can enterprise needs best be met in the development of industry curriculum? How can the needs of enterprises, individuals and the communities in which they are situated best be taken into account in curriculum planning for your industry? How can vocational educators assist in developing curriculum provisions that address the needs of enterprises, communities and individuals? What do you see as a community service obligation? What is an acceptable balance between the market and community service obligations of VET provisions?

Client	Items
Individuals Who: • Past students • Prospective students • Present students • Unemployed • VET/school co-ordination What issues: • Needs of individuals reflected by curriculum provisions, content, method and administrative arrangements • What has happened and what needs to happen Modes: • Interviews • Questionnaire for students—focus groups of existing students—a list of content areas • Current students (suitability of provisions) • List of curriculum concepts—prioritised • Past students (fittedness of course to performance in workplace) • Capture the differences (gaps between what had been taught and what was required: content) • Prospective students (expectations)	**Descriptive data** What do you want to get from doing this course? (existing/prospective students) In what ways do the teaching arrangements suit your needs? (existing/prospective students) In what ways does this course address your work or career goals? (existing/prospective students) What influences(d) your decision to do this course? (existing/past students) In what ways does the teaching and learning arrangements fail to address your study needs? (existing/prospective students) In what ways does this course fail to address your work or career goals? (existing/prospective students) In what ways did the course you undertook prepare you for the workplace? (past students) What did you want to get from doing the course? (past students) In what ways were your learning needs addressed in the course? (past students) In what ways did the course you undertook fail to prepare you for the workplace? (past students) In what ways did the teaching and learning arrangements in the course fail to address your needs? (past students) What information should you have had/do you need to make choices about what courses to enrol in? (past/existing/prospective students) **Predictive data** What does the term 'a quality VET provision' mean to you? What should be the range of roles that vocational educators should have to address your needs? How can your needs as a student best be reconciled to those of enterprises, industry and the community?
Community/regions Who: • Regional development boards • Trainers networks • VET-in-schools co-ordinators • Chamber of commerce • Local government • Employment National officers What issues: • Needs of community reflected by curriculum provisions, content, method and administrative arrangements • What has happened and what needs to happen Modes: • Interviews • List of curriculum concepts, prioritised	**Descriptive data** How are the current provisions of VET courses addressing the needs of the local community? In particular, how are the current provisions of food processing and clerical studies courses addressing these needs? In what ways are these VET provisions failing to address the needs of the local community? In particular, how are the provisions of food processing and clerical studies courses not addressing these needs? In what ways are the modes of study available to students addressing local needs? What currently occurs in the way of regional planning for VET in this area? In what ways is the concept of lifelong learning being addressed in these provisions?

Client	Items
Community/regions cont.	**Predictive data** What does the term 'a quality VET provision' mean in terms of this region? How best can regional community needs be addressed in curriculum development, design and implementation? In what ways is it possible to realise the needs of enterprise needs, those of local students and national goals for vocational education through locally based planning? What do you see as community service obligations? Describe what you believe to be the appropriate balance between the market and the community obligations of VET? How should regional planning for VET proceed best? What factors does this regional planning need to take into account? What do you see the role for vocational educators in this community should be?

Note:
Descriptive data: 'what is' the situation.
Predictive data: 'what should be'—to realise the needs and interests of a particular group, i.e. what arrangements would secure mutuality in goals.

Limitations in the research design

As with any research design, this investigation contains clear limitations. One is that no claims are made for this investigation to be comprehensive at the three sites. Rather, it sought to gain insights from selected individuals who represent the views of different client groups. Hence, the data gathered were from members of these client groups, rather than being representative of those client groups. Moreover, it was not possible to complete a uniform pattern of informants in each region because of differences in structure and organisation of the three regions, and because of the difficulty of accessing particular interest groups.

Much of the data focused on the TAFE provision. This was not a deliberate strategy, except in the case of the use of the TAFE GDS. However, for many of the respondents TAFE was the key provider with whom they had had contact and about whom they could provide data.

The analysis in each of the three case studies used a similar format, derived from the data in each site. So although the same framework was used, it was developed from an initial analysis at one site, and then used to guide the analysis at the others. However, as is presented in many of the tables in chapter 3, variations in data were evident across the sites.

Phase 3: Identifying transformations and consequences for VET policy and practice

The analysis of the data was undertaken using—but not constrained by or held to—the framework which has been advanced above as a result of the earlier OTFE study (Billett et al. 1997).

From the findings, analyses, and outcomes (goals and propositions), case studies were prepared for each of the three regions. These case studies were used to report the data from each region, and facilitate discussion and refinement with the representative samples of key client groups. The appendix comprises the three case studies. It is an analysis of the aggregated data which is reported in chapter 3.

The structure of the case studies and chapter 3 is as follows:

- an overview of the region is provided
- the descriptive data are presented and analysed ('what is') before detailing the normative data ('what should be')
- a synthesis of 'what should be' versus 'what is' is provided
- the aggregated findings are used to corroborate the deductions advanced in chapter 4

The analysis sought to address the research question and associated sub-questions. Table 2.4 details the relationship between the questions asked and the analysis of the data.

Phase 4: Refining the analysis with key VET client groups

To gauge responses and refine the findings, the case studies were returned to representatives of the key client groups in the three regions. This key concern was to determine whether the respondents believed the data reflected accurately what they had provided, and to canvas for any discernible gaps in the data or its analysis.

The case studies were prepared as detailed, stand-alone documents. The responses from the regions were used within the case studies, and also to refine the analysis in chapter 3 and, when appropriate, in chapter 4.

Phase 5: Finalising the report

From the deliberations in phase 4, the main report was finalised. Also, from this report, the executive summary was synthesised and written up in a style appropriate for its intended audience of practitioners and policy-makers. This document—also stand-alone—is restricted in length (20 pages maximum). The executive summary comprises the key assertions arising from the report, an overview of the context of the study, the method used and the findings.

Table 2.4: Relationship between the research questions and the data sources, and their means of analysis

Key question	Data sources	Analysis
What are the policy and practice implications for VET arising from the changing relationships among industry, enterprises, communities and individuals?	*Descriptive data*— all data from all sites, key clients groups, etc. *Predictive data*— all data from all sites, key clients groups, etc.	Synthesis of all data *(descriptive and predictive data)* against the key question and related sub-question
Sub-questions		
What are the *likely changes in these relationships and how will this transform advice and planning* for vocational education provisions and influence curriculum practice in VET? (predictive and speculative dimensions to this question)	*Predictive data*— all data from all sites, key clients groups, etc.	Synthesis of what changes are likely and what this means for the formulation of VET policy and practice
How will these changing relationships transform the role of national and State training authorities?	*Predictive data*— all data from all sites and key clients groups	Overall synthesis—drawing on analysis of 'what is'/'what should be' and their consequences for VET policy
What shift in values is required for enterprises to participate voluntarily in VET provisions at higher levels?	*Predictive data*— all enterprise-based data	Synthesis of predictive data with reference to wider studies on cost-benefits literature
How best can curriculum development, implementation and evaluation processes be conceived for the emerging de-centred approach to VET?	*Descriptive and predictive data*— all data, all sites and key client groups	Synthesis of data
How best can national and State-based goals for a skilled workforce be reconciled with the specific and specialised needs of enterprises?	*Descriptive and predictive data*— from industry and enterprise sources	
What are the roles of vocational educators in responding to these emerging needs?	*Predictive data*— all data, all sites	

Note:
Descriptive data: 'what is' the situation.
Predictive data: 'what should be'—to realise the needs and interests of a particular group, i.e. what arrangements would secure mutuality in goals.

Outcomes

A framework comprising the goals for and propositions about the provision of VET will be advanced, in an attempt to increase both its quantum and quality through reconciling the needs of the key client groups. This reconciliation will only be representative. However, given the diverse regions and the involvement of a number of industries, the findings should carry some basis for being representative of the key client groups.

The changes in relationships and emerging roles that are identified and detailed above will be appraised and extended through this project. It therefore aims to examine both the veracity and implications for VET policy, planning and implementation arising from this tentative framework.

More specifically, it is intended that the framework will inform readers about the goals for vocational education programs, means of their development, pathways for individuals' career progression within industry-based VET programs, and the management of both strategic and localised goals for VET.

In addition, a key concern of this project is how a greater focus in curriculum provisions upon individuals' aspirations and the needs of regions can be reconciled with those of industry and enterprises. Also, the degree to which market-based reforms need to be transformed to address the requirements of these key client groups will be examined.

Moreover, the project—in determining how best the needs of enterprises can be addressed—will explore means for enhancing their commitment to training. Overall, this framework aims to guide the planning for, implementation of and evaluation of VET.

3 Findings

Introduction

This chapter comprises the presentation and analysis of the data for each of the regional sites, and deductions from the findings.

The data were initially presented and analysed in a separate case study prepared for each region. These case studies were returned to respondents in each region in order to gain comments for refinements and validation. It is these case studies which comprise the appendix to this report. However, not all of the detail found in the case studies is presented here. Yet, in presenting an aggregation of the data and analyses within the case studies, both the atypical and the typical are presented.

The structure adopted here is to present the data and discuss the findings from overviews about the three regions as follows:

- section 1: an overview of regional factors is presented, to identify variables that are likely to set regions apart and have consequences for vocational education
- section 2: data on the changing relationships within decision-making in VET are presented and discussed
- section 3: data are presented and discussed that depicts the current provisions of VET as the four client groups (industry, enterprises, region and individual) perceived them—'what is'
- section 4: data on the ideals, aspirations and needs of the client groups are synthesised and analysed against the data on how these needs are being and not being met in the current VET system

First data source

Data used in the case studies and in this chapter were drawn from a number of sources. Data were gathered specifically for this project focusing upon the concerns just outlined, as detailed in chapter 2. The data-gathering strategies in each region comprised structured interviews and focus groups with subjects representing the views of industry, community, enterprises and individuals:

- Industry representatives were from ITABs and TAFE curriculum sections who have responsibilities for the 'industry-led' VET provisions in the two selected industry sectors. These were essentially spokespersons for government policy which advanced the bi-partite views of industry.

- Community representatives were those who spoke on behalf of the regions.
- Representatives from enterprises were those from within the food processing and clerical sectors.
- Individuals comprised prospective, current and past students who were surveyed as well as participated in focus groups.

The sampling and data-gathering within each region did not seek to be exhaustive or wholly representative. Rather, it elicited understandings and ideas from representatives of the two industries, enterprises within those industries, the local community, and individuals who were prospective, existing or past students in courses servicing those industries.

Typically, the interviews of enterprises, and community representatives, focus groups and surveys of students were undertaken with individuals from within the regions. And, as mentioned above, industry representatives were those from State ITABs and TAFE curriculum officers who have responsibilities for the selected industry sectors. These interviews were conducted in State capitals, not always in the regions.

In presenting these data, some conventions have been adopted. The sites and the respondents themselves need to remain anonymous. However, as it is important to identify which interests they represent, the responses are designated as community (C), industry (I), enterprise (E) and students (S). For individuals (students), there is a further delineation into those who were part of a focus group (FG) and those who were the participants in a survey (SU). Additional detail is provided about the standing of the informant(s) when appropriate.

The data from the interviews and focus groups were transcribed and tabulated—and summaries of this qualitative data are presented in tables with sections of this chapter. The three regions are referred to as the metropolitan region (MC), the provincial centre (PC) and the remote rural centre (RC). In these regions data from four institutes of TAFE are referenced: the institute of TAFE in the metropolitan area (MCIT), the institute in the remote rural centre (RCIT) and the two institutes of TAFE in the provincial centre (PCIT#1 & PCIT#2).

Second data source

A second data set comprised existing statistical information on the area and students from the region. These comprise:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data from the 1995 census
- documents from local development agencies that draw on their own surveys and specific ABS data
- the 1997 TAFE GDS

The ABS data were used to furnish demographic data about the region. The data from local development agencies were used to indicate measures of economic

activity. The GDS survey was managed by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) on behalf of ANTA.

In section 3, the GDS survey was used to provide data about students who undertook studies at institutes of TAFE in the three regions. Survey data about the four institutes of TAFE were kindly provided by these institutes. The graduate surveys, which are based around each institute, furnished demographic data about graduates, the industries they are likely to be employed in, reasons for attending the course, details of those courses, and a range of data on benefits and satisfaction outcomes. Although not specific to the two selected industry sectors, the data were useful in determining how the current provisions are perceived to be meeting graduates' needs in each region.

However, limitations of the survey data need to be stated. Firstly, not all graduates responded to the survey, so the data represent respondents only. Secondly, only graduates of courses with a duration of 200 hours were surveyed. Thirdly, the survey for the second provincial centre institute (PCIT#2) included graduates who had studied at centres other than those at the campus in the selected provincial region, thus providing data that were drawn from a wider source than the designated region.

Section 1: An overview of the regions

Regional factors

The three regions have quite different sets of factors influencing the provision of vocational education, which includes the goals for, processes of, and the structure and organisation of vocational education provisions.

From the three case studies key variables are identifiable. Take for instance the cultural and linguistic heritage of each region's population:

- Of the *provincial centre* region's population, over 95 per cent are either Australian born or from English speaking countries (table 3.1). Five per cent of the population is from non-English speaking background countries. The indigenous population comprises about 1.2 per cent of the population.

- The population of the *rural centre* is also predominately Australian born. For instance, 94 per cent of the respondents to the Graduate Student Survey for RCIT (RCIT 1997) report Australia as the place of birth. Of the population, 1.0 per cent (1370) have Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) heritage (ABS 1996). Five per cent of the population (1370) were born in countries where English is not the first language.

- Yet although, according to the ABS data, 91 per cent of the *metropolitan* region's population are either Australian born or from English speaking countries, 44 per cent of the graduates at the MCIT were from non–English speaking countries (see table 3.14).

So, whereas two centres had populations and graduates which were overwhelmingly English language speakers, a third had variance both within the population and then between the population and the student cohort. These data provide for comparisons across the regions to determine whether there are significant differences in the composition of each region's population, and its likely student cohort.

Table 3.1: Selected data from the regions

	PC#1	PC#2	RC[1]	MC
Population	41 769	48 630	27 047	1 488 883
ATSI pop	279	761	271	21 887
%	0.6	1.6	1.0	1.4
NESB pop	2305	2316	1 370	142 459
%	5.5	4.7	5.1	9.6
Median age	31	33	32 (34)[2]	32

Note:
1 Includes the rural centre statistical area.
2 For the rural centre and (surrounding area).
Source: ABS 1996, selected characteristics.

Beyond these variables of demographics were others associated with:

- the types of industries operating in the regions
- the kinds of employment opportunities that the regions are able to furnish
- different levels of educational provisions
- goals for the regions

Table 3.2 presents the variables in an analysis of the data from the case studies.

Table 3.2: Variable factors within regions, and consequences for vocational education

Variables	Consequences for VET
Type of industries (scope, specialisation)	Selection of courses, levels of certification, availability of course
Employment opportunities (types, modes, scope)	Integrated/non-integration of on- and off-job provisions, opportunities for ELT, duration of course, experiences in workplaces, demands of local enterprises
Educational provisions (scope, access, modes, relationships)	Availability, on- or off-campus mode, access to institutions, relationships between provisions
Demographic factors (age, ethnicity, language, educational achievement, size, etc.)	Cohort qualities, readiness, need for support
Goals/needs (development, consolidation, variation diversity)	Focus of educational provisions
Regional structures/identity (visibility, opaqueness, identity)	Ability for local needs to be identified and responded to

Note:
ELT–entry-level training

In table 3.2, the variables within regions across the case studies have been aggregated into a consolidated list in the left hand column. In the right-hand column, the likely consequences for educational provisions are identified. What these data suggest is that the types of industry sectors for whom

vocational education provisions will need to be furnished will vary from region to region. This is already acknowledged in planning processes in some States. These data also suggest that there are likely to be differences in the both the goals for vocational education programs and the processes by which the curriculum is enacted. For instance, in two regions the provision of food processing courses was a major component of the VET effort, and this was conducted mainly within enterprises. In one region, there was an increase in the demand for viticulture workers, and the need to train these workers was a priority that set it apart from other regions concerned with maintaining other industry sectors.

Moreover, differences across the regions in the percentage of students who are employed, are from a non-English speaking background, and their location and prior experience with educational provisions, suggest that vocational education provisions need to purposefully attempt to accommodate these needs.

So, rather than assuming heterogeneity in goals for and within educational processes, differences need to be identified for these regions.

In section 3, tables present data from the GDS on:

- demographic factors (table 3.14)
- industries to which graduates were likely to be employed (table 3.15)
- which occupational groups (table 3.16) support these differences

These tables present data on the differences across the regions, and between regions and the States, emphasising variability in regional factors.

One variable that stood out was the differences in the potential for there to be a market for VET provisions in each region. While such a market was reported to exist in the metropolitan region, it was not really evident in the rural centre. Indeed, in the latter region efforts to create a VET market had been unsuccessful, even with non-market support. Where there was a market-based provision, it was usually afforded by direct competition between TAFE providers. In both non-metropolitan regions there was evidence of metropolitan institutes of TAFE providing programs, either because of competitive tendering or a lack of regional provisions. However, in each of these regions, participants in these programs declared the distance between themselves and the providers to be unsatisfactory. Concerns about the inability of market-based provisions to meet the needs of non-metropolitan regions have been made (Anderson 1997), as have the rationale of using market-based strategies in situations where there is a 'thin' market (Anderson 1997; Burke 1995). In an analysis of the best ways for VET to respond to regional planning these concerns are also reinforced.

The simple assertion here is that that the three regions were not homogenous in a complex of factors that influence both the goals for vocational education provisions, and how those provisions should proceed. They have differences in terms of the demography, the industries that are situated there, the infrastructure, opportunities for employment and education and, as is reported in section 2, other needs which influence the provision of vocational education. Demographic factors are recognised and acknowledged in the planning

processes in some States (STB 1997). The issue for policy and practice is how best these needs can be met, and whether changes in the relationship among VET clients will assist or inhibit this goal. What is advanced later in section 2 is that regional planning for VET needs to take into account the patterns of industry structures, economic activity and their implications for the development and maintenance of skilfulness. In particular—rather than depending upon key enterprises—patterns of productive activity need to be identified and used as the basis for VET responses at the local level (Rees 1997).

Section 2: Changing relationships

Changes towards an enterprise focus within VET

Industry and enterprise subjects were asked whether any change in the relationship between industry-based provisions of vocational education and those representing a more enterprise-based provision were evident. Subsequently, they were asked about the likely effects of such a shift.

Table 3.3 provides aggregated summaries of the data from the industry and enterprise informants that such a shift is taking place. The left column identifies the client group and the evidence they furnished of a shift to an enterprise focus. The right column identifies the responses to the evidence from each of the three sites. The numbers indicate the frequency that subjects identified with each statement of evidence. The number of industry informants was eight for the provincial centre region and four from the other two regions. The potential number of enterprise respondents was six from the rural centre and ten from the other two regions.

Table 3.3: Shift to enterprise focus

Industry	PC	RC	MC
Customisation of training (training packages)	5	2	3
On-the-job provisions	1	2	3
Shift in public provision	1		1
Still retaining an industry influence	2	2	1
Happening in different ways in different enterprises	1	1	
Legislation removing industry influence from ITABs			1
Enterprise	**PC**	**RC**	**MC**
Negotiation of course content and outcomes	3	3	3
Strands within food processing	1		
Ability to select modules to address needs (training packages)	1	1	2
Concerns about the degree of tailoring occurring	1	1	
Satisfaction with facilitated approach	1	1	
On-the-job provision reflects shift	1	1	2
Small businesses' difficulty of establishing relationships with providers	1		
Assessment in the workplace		1	
Not going to happen			1
Partnerships between enterprises and providers			1

From this table it can be seen that both industry and enterprises' informants were in overall agreement that the focus for VET provisions is currently being directed towards individual enterprises in the two industries that were the subject of the investigation.

Industry informants across the three regions commonly referred to on-the-job provisions, the customisation of training and the retention of an industry influence as evidence of the change to an enterprise focus. The two non-metropolitan regions made reference to on-the-job provisions, which reflect other data that suggest this form of provision is more likely in these situations. Erosion of the public provision was also mentioned as evidence of the change of focus in two regions.

Common across the three regions—from an enterprise perspective—was evidence in the form of the negotiation of course content, the ability to select modules and the on the job provisions. Other evidence from two regions was reference to concerns about the degree of tailoring, satisfaction with the facilitated support provided by TAFE, and the difficulties arising for small business.

However, there were differences across the two industry sectors. The stranding within the Certificate of Food Processing (CFP) permitted an initial fashioning of sub-sectoral (e.g. viticulture, meat, vegetable) needs that was not available in the clerical industry sector.

Also, the evidence of large enterprises' negotiation of courses was differentiated. In the food processing sector, this negotiation concerned the tailoring of modules within the CFP to the needs of the enterprises. In addition, the courses were offered on the job at the enterprises in ways that suited best their needs. The negotiation in the clerical 'industry' is more problematic because its definition as an 'industry' does not hold up to scrutiny. Rather, it is an occupation or vocation that services the needs of a range of industry sectors. Consequently, beliefs about generic skills that are applicable across these sectors appear to underpin this sector's curriculum arrangements.

However, there were diverse views about the degree to which, and at what level, there was commonality in clerical work. Large enterprises had expectations that courses would be customised for the needs of their enterprise—in terms of both the application of particular skills, and also involvement in the 'industry'-specific activities (e.g. health service, retail). In the State in which the rural community is located, local government authorities collectively sponsor an agency to provide vocational education tailored to the needs of local government. Among the courses offered by this agency were clerical studies. Despite this, the data suggest that the formal provision of courses was more standardised in this sector than in food processing, and almost universally based within educational institutions. Moreover—perhaps because of these existing arrangements—small enterprises in this sector did not seem as strident in their expectations that their needs would be comprehensively met, as those in the food processing sector.

Across the subjects that represented views of industry and enterprise, there was consistent agreement that the focus for VET provisions was now being directed towards individual enterprises. Informants from smaller enterprises (clerical), however, doubted that this would happen.

From the industry representatives, the evidence for this claim was in terms of:

- the types of provisions that are currently being enacted
- the customisation taking place or about to take place
- views about variations in provisions (see table 3.3)

Enterprise representatives spoke about the:

- quality of negotiations
- mechanisms that permit and inhibit the accommodation of their needs
- on-the-job training provisions

It seems that the stranding within the food processing sector offers an initial fashioning of the enterprise focus. In doing so, it offers the prospect of facilitating the realisation of enterprise needs in ways that also meet individuals' goals of certification and portability, and industry concerns with common standards.

An interesting point here is that different assumptions underpin provisions of these courses in each of the sectors. The clerical courses appear to be founded upon generic outcomes that can be applied across industry sectors, whereas the food processing course is based on identified sub-sectoral needs fashioned to contextualise generic aspects of the course.

Table 3.4 provides summarised statements of issues arising from the shift to an enterprise-focused provision of VET. Issues identified by industry and enterprise informants are shown in the left column. The frequency of these concerns identified by subjects in each region is depicted in the right column.

Table 3.4: Issues arising from enterprise focus

Industry	**PC**	**RC**	**MC**
Specificity of content and outcomes (parochial/customisation)	3	2	3
Eroding the portability of qualifications	3	1	3
Erosion of national curriculum goals	1	2	1
Fragmentation of curriculum	1	2	1
Short-termism of educational goals	1	1	
Potential for VET to be delineated by a public/private dichotomy	1		
Danger of clerical work returning to lower status			1
Breaks down international competitiveness			1
Supports minimal training			1
Enterprise	**PC**	**RC**	**MC**
Has to be enterprise driven	4	2	3
More negotiation required	4	2	
Retention of national qualifications	2		2
Developing enterprise capacity to train	2		1
Common base of skills is required	1		1
Longer duration (higher award) courses through TAFE; shorter courses through enterprises	1		1
Requires intimate knowledge of enterprise, structure, staff and goals	1	1	
Fair to employees; not inhibited by too specific provisions	1		

The industry informants' concerns were quite distinct from those of enterprises. The latter focused upon concerns about the specific qualities of enterprise-based provisions, in terms of content and goals, and as a consequence the erosion of national curriculum goals and problems for certification and portability for employees. In addition, system concerns emerged, associated with short-term foci in enterprise goals, and the potential division of VET provisions into those that can be provided through the public system, and those solely accessible within enterprises.

From the enterprise perspective, the most common concern was with securing a tighter enterprise focus. It was held that the VET system had to be driven by enterprise needs, and that more negotiation was required by providers to develop an intimate knowledge of the enterprise, its goals and staff. However, there was some recognition by one clerical employer of the need for a common base of portable skills. Concerns were raised by others that courses negotiated at the enterprise level had to carry national recognition.

In addition, for one food processing employer, the enterprise-based provisions had to be fair to employees. That is, these programs should not be so specific as to extinguish the aspirations of their employees. However, this was not a commonly expressed concern.

The relationship between providers and enterprises was marked in other ways. It was proposed by two clerical sector employers that enterprises were likely to provide shorter duration programs, whereas institutes of TAFE should offer longer programs. The development of the capacity for enterprises to offer programs 'in-house' was also seen as a role for providers, particularly TAFE. However, not all enterprises wished to manage the training of their employees. Some viewed this to be the role for providers such as TAFE, who had the appropriate expertise. In all, enterprises wished to have access to this expertise, albeit to tailor provisions to their needs, either through enterprise-based or provider-furnished provisions that meet their specific workplace needs.

In sum, the informants furnished evidence of a shift occurring, from VET provisions primarily meeting industry needs (uniform national curriculum and standards), towards responding to the needs of enterprises (customised arrangements and enterprise influenced selection of content and intents).

This was more directly the case in the food processing industry—with its strands, employees undertaking training, and emerging demand for VET provisions—than in the clerical sector. It should be emphasised that the majority of food processing courses are offered off-campus, whereas courses for the clerical sector are usually campus-based—and participants (students) are less likely to be employees. Some food processing enterprises directly fund their own VET provisions; others provide courses as part of the State training profile and are remunerated by the State for this provision. Equally, the strands within the CFP necessitate consideration of particular needs of the enterprise in terms of transforming the generic and strand content of the course. These needs precipitate tailoring of both content and intents (aims, goals and objectives). As

courses for the clerical sector are already in existence and largely offered through a college-based provision, there appears to be less direct demand for tailoring. However, there was an expectation that these courses will also meet the particular needs of the local enterprises.

Both client groups identified concerns arising from the shift to an enterprise-focused provision of VET.

Industry informants were concerned about the:

- erosion of national curriculum and certification
- potential for VET provisions to become too enterprise-specific in their content and goals

Enterprises were concerned about the requirement for courses to intimately address their needs, and be customised accordingly. This is most understandable when the courses were funded by the enterprise.

However, even when the enterprise's training was a component of the State training profile, this did not appear to warrant a less enterprise-specific focus. In Victoria, the State training system was reported to be putting in place arrangements to monitor the quality of enterprise-based courses funded as part of the State training profile. When the course is offered by an external provider, enterprises can demand customisation from providers in an increasingly competitive VET market. This provision may or may not be mindful of industry concerns and goals. Enterprises want providers to develop rich and intimate understandings of their needs—including the readiness of their workers—and to tailor national prescription to the enterprise's own particular needs. However, it would seem that only the largest of enterprises would contemplate such interaction with multiple providers in a true market sense. In particular, it seems unlikely that providers will be able to provide rich analyses of small businesses' needs in a lean market-based situation. However, there remains an expectation from small enterprises that their needs ought to be met.

Emerging concerns for other client groups include:

- the separation of courses into publicly and privately funded
- access and participation being determined by employment status
- short courses, such as initial preparation, being offered in the workplace—whereas higher level and longer duration courses only being offered through educational institutions

At a time of high unemployment and stagnant economic development, such divisions may erode opportunities for those entering the workforce, engaging in entry-level training, and seeing employment and preparation as linked.

For individuals, this shift means that workplace-based provisions may discriminate against those not in employment, whereas those in employment are more likely only to access provisions customised or selected for the particular workplace.

What is proposed here, and in section 4, is that enterprises ideally want two levels of customisation:

1 The particular content and goals for the program need to address the requirements for vocational practice in the enterprise.
2 These activities also should be integrated into the particular organisational practice within the enterprise.

An example of this would be food processing or clerical workers being able to address other core activities of the enterprise. A clerical worker in a retail outlet might be expected to have the knowledge required to sell merchandise, or, if working in a hospital, to carry out non-clerical hospital duties. Such an outcome could be positive for individuals where opportunities for advancement and career development exist—that is, where a specialisation has the potential to address the aspiration and needs of individuals. Alternatively, where such progression is not possible, these provisions may well inhibit individuals' aspirations and potential. In addition, it was evident that enterprise-based provisions are not allowing individuals to complete certification requirements, thereby inhibiting portability.

For regions, this shift sees local enterprises having more tailored training provisions, which may directly enhance their productivity. Equally, these provisions are providing access to educational provisions for workers who have never before enjoyed access to such opportunities.

Yet concerns for regions include the long-term consequences of such enterprise-specific arrangements—particularly for those who are not employed, and for workers intending to redeploy their vocational knowledge when they cease working for a particular employer. So there are *industry, individual* and *regional* benefits and concerns associated with enterprise-focused arrangements. These are considered in more detail in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Planning: Meeting the needs of industry, enterprises, individuals and regions

The need for regional planning for VET has been acknowledged (Schofield & Associates 1996; STB 1995). It has been claimed that centralised planning lacks the sensitivity required to gauge fully regional needs (Schofield & Associates 1996). Hence, it is necessary to understand how local needs can be identified and how planning should best proceed. Two sets of data are drawn upon to discuss the way in which processes of planning and advice can best proceed—firstly, at the regional level, and secondly, in ways that can meet the needs of all the client groups. The first set of data responded to the 'what is happening' question; the second were responses to the 'what should be happening' question.

For the first set of data, industry and community informants were asked how the regional planning for VET was meeting the needs of enterprises, individuals and regions. The responses were not plentiful, although different perspectives were evident in the data.

Table 3.5 presents these data under headings that categorise the responses from the industry and community informants together with how these planning processes met the needs of the client group. Consequently, in the left column the issues identified by the informants are categorised under headings referring to each of the four client groups. The right columns indicate the frequency with which the industry and community respondents from each region identified these issues.

Table 3.5: Regional planning

	PC		RC		MC	
Region	I	C	I	C	I	C
Planning not occurring	1	2		2	1	
Being addressed through enterprise consultation	1		2			
Regional consultation agencies (e.g. regional development boards)		2		2		4
TAFE's informal links		3	1		1	
Competitive environment inhibits planning at local level		1				1
Schools' regional management committees		1		1		1
Works when it happens				1		
Regional focus not appropriate model for FP					1	
ITABs consult with industry and community						1
Teacher networks						1
Enterprise	I	C	I	C	I	C
Planning replaced by enterprise-specific training provisions	1		1			
Need more human resource management planning to address low literacy levels					1	
Small business has no influence					1	
Individuals	I	C	I	C	I	C
Individuals not involved (e.g. if they cannot get a job they cannot get trained)	2			2		
Structure in place addressing lifelong learning					1	
Industry	I	C	I	C	I	C
ITABs not representative: enterprises do not get a look-in (provider dominated)	1				1	
Constraints at a time of reduction in funds			1			
Planning for industry through union representation						

Note:
FP–food processing

Three themes emerge. Firstly, that market-based approaches have removed the need for planning. It was held that direct consultation with enterprises and the development of enterprise-based provisions had removed the need for planning. Secondly, that planning was not occurring. This view was supported by concern that the competitive environment inhibits the prospect for collaborative planning as the providers, who possess much of the important knowledge about VET, are in competition with each other. Moreover, individuals representing the student perspective are not represented on planning forums. Equally, it is claimed that the industry advisory boards are not representative of enterprises. Thirdly, that planning is occurring informally, but has the potential to be far more effective if it were to be conducted through TAFE and regional development agencies.

From these data arise the view that if enterprise needs are being realised through the marketplace there is no need for regional planning. Such a view posits enterprise needs as being the only ones worthy of consideration.

In addition, the idea that market provisions remove the need for planning fails to meet important strategic goals for vocational education. This circumstance raises the issue of dependence upon large enterprises that are likely to be more concerned about their own specific needs than those of the region (Rees 1997).

For example, community respondents in both the provincial centre and the rural centre, noted that local enterprises are aware that the downturn in apprentice numbers will likely see a shortage of skilled labour in the not too distant future. However, this situation has not encouraged these enterprises to employ additional apprentices. Rather, it seems that these enterprises believe government will do something as this event occurs. Interestingly, in these regions there is little movement in the mature population. Both of these regions have relatively stable workforces, and the enterprises experience difficulty in getting skilled workers to move to the area. Consequently, it would seem that enterprise investment in apprentices in these regions would seem to be a reasonably safe proposition. However, it seems enterprises are unwilling to undertake this type of strategic initiative. Rees (1997) proposes that regional planning be guided by patterns of productive activity, rather than the needs of specific large enterprises. He also advocates a pro-active role on the part of VET to assist the development of the region's capacity.

A concern guiding this investigation is that, although the focus of VET provisions is changing, this change is merely from one set of interests (industry) to another (enterprises). However, mutuality of needs of all the key stakeholders (industry, enterprises, individual and region) is proposed as a means by which the full potential of VET can be realised and its maturity found (Billett et al. 1997).

Consequently, informants from all four client groups were asked how best the needs of enterprises, individuals and communities could be secured in curriculum planning. Overall, there was little in the way of overt rejection of addressing mutuality in the needs of all four client groups. However, issues about readiness, sectional interests, the particular requirements of enterprises and the difficulty with consultative processes were used to outline the complexity of this undertaking.

The responses about how this planning should proceed were diverse, yet can be categorised under three headings:

- consultation
- sectional interests
- co-ordination

Summaries of the data containing client perspectives of those identifying with the responses are depicted in table 3.6. In this table, factors that both support and indicate inhibiting factors are presented in the left column. In the right columns are those indicating the frequency by which informants from each client group in each region report each factor. The three approaches are discussed in the following sections.

Consultation

Consultative processes that engaged and met the interests of all interested parties were broadly advocated. However, without broad participation and good understanding of VET by all client groups, consultation was seen to be premature and problematic because it may be unable to reconcile different needs. These processes were proposed as a means of meeting all client groups' needs, and as being able to occur at the regional level.

Concerns were expressed about the adequacy of market-based approaches being used as substitutes for planning, yet failing to meet local needs. The consultative approach to planning was held to offer the ability for the region to develop and submit a consolidated case to State or federal decision-makers and funding bodies.

However, this approach to planning was also viewed as problematic because of differing needs which may not be readily reconcilable through consultation—e.g. short-term and specific enterprise needs versus educational goals.

It was also held that the process might be dominated by those with the resources available and interest to participate.

Added to this was concern that the demands of the market would inhibit fruitful consultations, particularly those involving providers. This is an important consideration, as much of the available expertise about VET in the non-metropolitan regions was held to be within providers.

Aligned with these concerns were those of enterprises who claimed that participation in such arrangements in the past were frustrated by the apparent irrelevance of what was discussed and proposed. That is, they may not wish to engage.

Sectional interests

Sectional interests, and particularly those of enterprises, were proposed as a means of advancing the needs of all other client groups' interests. The proposal typified in the data was as follows:

> *If enterprises prosper, they will provide employment and career progression for local individuals, the community will prosper, and industry goals for levels of skilfulness will accordingly be met* (see table 3.6).

It was proposed that students' needs will be realised through the provision of rich experiences in the workplace. Equally, it was claimed that not all client groups warrant equal legitimacy for inclusion. For example, it was proposed by enterprise representatives that students may not know what they need to learn. In other cases, industry representatives suggested that enterprises do not really understand either their needs, or the processes for best realising their needs.

Benefits in the form of greater interaction between enterprises and educational institutions were also proposed as likely to accrue from these market-type arrangements.

Table 3.6: Realising mutuality of need

	PC				RC				MC			
Consultation—*factors supporting*	I	E	C	S	I	E	C	S	I	E	C	S
Consultation—involved in planning and development	2	2	3		3		1		4	4	4	
Meet all needs		2								1		
Benefits in institutional and workplace provisions		1								1	1	
Market not in community interest			1									
Need to account for individual needs				1						2	1	
Options should be fostered				1							2	2
Representations to advocate and present a case			1									
More feedback on/evaluation of courses										1		
Consultation—*factors inhibiting*	I	E	C	S	I	E	C	S	I	E	C	S
Enterprise short-termism			1								1	
Adequacy of representation		1	2		2	1			1	3	2	
Frequency of process			2									
Difficulties of collaboration in a market situation			2								1	
Reconciling educational, enterprise, national and local needs			2			2				1	2	
Difficult to ascertain needs of some groups										1		
Sectional interests—*factors supporting*	I	E	C	S	I	E	C	S	I	E	C	S
Students do not know what they want		1				1						
Enterprise focus provides for students' development		1		2		1				2		
If enterprises prosper so do employees and region		1		2		1				1		
Enterprise can identify needs				2		1	1		1	1		
Training relates to enterprise needs (productivity)				2		2			2	1		2
Need to enhance industry leadership and standing						1	1					
Sectional interests—*factors inhibiting*	I	E	C	S	I	E	C	S	I	E	C	S
Each group has different needs		1		2		1						
Students benefit from a range of experiences		1	1	4		1	3					3
Too reactive at the moment			1	1							1	
Any sectional interests exclusive				3		1			1			
Need to address equity issues									3			
Hard to tell whose interests are being served											1	
Co-ordination—*factors supporting*	I	E	C	S	I	E	C	S	I	E	C	S
Cannot reconcile until VET understood by all parties	1											
Co-ordinate activities	2		1		1	1	1			1		
Needs to be undertaken by/or involving TAFE		1	2			1						
Local planning important (local needs)		2	4			4			1	1	1	
Students do not know what they want		1				1				1		
Each group has different needs	1	1				3	1					
Market is not in community interest			1				1					
Benefits in both institutional and workplace provisions		1			2						1	
Need to be strategic and prioritise			2		1							
Need to account for individual needs				1		1		2			2	
More options should be fostered				1						2	2	
Representations to advocate and present a case			1		1					1		
Co-ordination—*factors inhibiting*	I	E	C	S	I	E	C	S	I	E	C	S
Focus groups swamped by large numbers of players			1			1	1					
Difficulties of collaboration in a market situation			1			1	1					
Balancing educational and enterprise needs			1			1		2				

Countering these views were concerns about a lack of diversity in student experiences, and the reactive nature and the highly specific focus of VET provisions in the workplace. That is, there were concerns that the full range of

needs and requirements of the community, and those who lived within it, are not likely to be addressed.

Enterprise informants and focus groups of informants employed in the food processing industry proposed the sectoral-based approach to meeting the needs of all client groups. Conversely, community informants and students (both employed and non-employed) were more likely to identify the shortcomings of this approach.

Co-ordination

The co-ordination of VET provisions was proposed as a means to plan and manage the needs of the four client groups.

The co-ordinated approach is proposed by industry informants as the means to:

- redress the artificial divisions of interests among the client groups
- consider the range of provisions more objectively

The need to involve providers such as TAFE was proposed by community and enterprise informants, in an approach to local planning that identifies and draws upon community needs. It was stated that such a process has potential to be strategic and to avoid reactive and short-term focused market-based provisions. Again, such a process could result in a consolidated case to engage in negotiations with State and federal decision-makers and funding bodies.

So, the broad-based support for planning VET provisions most likely to meet all client groups' needs was held to be the use of co-ordination. This support was polarised around:

- the processes of best reconciling those needs and concerns about which voices should be heard
- the informed nature of those voices
- mechanisms that can reduce the differences in interests and the ability of the market to meet needs

Opposing this is a market-based stratagem, that subordinates planning to an inevitable outcome of market forces and needs within the community.
The most strongly favoured approach to mutuality of needs is through co-ordination. Of the three, this approach to reconciling the needs of the four groups elicited the most favourable responses and least number of inhibiting concerns.

It seems that co-ordination, undertaken in ways that managed and balanced the needs and inputs of the client groups through consultation, offers a way of proceeding given the marketplace and the uneven knowledge of VET across all client groups.

However, such a process is only likely to be successful when perceived to be taking into account all the interests—including those most able to contribute (e.g. providers anxious to secure market share, and powerful economic or governmental voices).

Seemingly, a balance has to be struck between a process that permits enterprise needs to be identified and met, in ways that avoid a raft of idiosyncratic offerings that jeopardise both individuals' and industry goals. For instance, although the CFP offers flexibility, the non-completion rates of participants is too high for industry goals or individuals' aspirations to be realised. Equally, with clerical work some content and intents need to be identified that is both generic to the industry (e.g. keyboarding) but specific to enterprise or strands' needs. The likelihood of achieving this type of balance will not be uniform, and as the delineation between publicly and privately funded provisions widens, it is likely to become more difficult to realise.

In proposing co-ordination as a model for regional planning, it is understood that it is neither wholly consistent with, nor wholly incongruent to, a market-based stratagem. In each of the regions were identifiable agencies (e.g. regional development boards) which would be appropriately placed to plan for VET needs.

Having presented and discussed the data on planning, the four groups' views on how vocational educators should best meet this changing balance are discussed next.

Roles for and characteristics of vocational educators

Subjects from all client groups were asked how vocational educators could assist in developing curriculum provisions that meet the needs of the community, enterprises and individuals. The responses were diverse and plentiful, and are best presented under headings of the role of vocational educators and a subsidiary one describing their characteristics.

Data on vocational educators' roles warrant further delineation in order to best categorise the responses. These categories are:

- consultant
- curriculum developer
- instructor
- advocate and supporter of learners
- policy developer

Table 3.7 presents summarised data from the interviews and focus groups, categorised to form subheadings with the items that sit within the categories arrayed below. Respondents associated with the items are identified to right of the item.

Consultant

It was from industry and enterprise informants, including student focus groups from within enterprises, that the role of the educator as a consultant was most readily identified and supported. The consultancy role comprises vocational educators negotiating and consulting with enterprises to identify and realise their needs. It includes demonstrating the utility of the proposed course to the enterprise and having the ability to add something to the enterprises' training needs and arrangements: adding value. Within this role the ability to negotiate with enterprises is supported most strongly. Community informants proposed interactions with enterprises and an educational leadership role in the community.

So, educational leadership is manifested in two quite different ways: (i) being a leader in the community, and (ii) having an ability to add value to enterprise needs. Significantly, the key focus was upon being able to secure enterprise goals, which was supported by the range of informants.

Table 3.7: Role of vocational educators

	PC				RC				MC			
Consultant and educational leader	**I**	**E**	**C**	**S**	**I**	**E**	**C**	**S**	**I**	**E**	**C**	**S**
Independent consultant and 'honest broker'	1	3			1	2	3		1	2		
Negotiating with enterprises	2	3	1	1	1	3	1		2			
Knowledgeable in many areas		1	1		1	1	1			2	1	1
Add value to enterprise need analysis	1	1				1				1		
Understand enterprise perspective		1	1		1	2	1	1	1	2		
Provide leadership for community			1				1				1	
Making enterprises self-sufficient in training										1		
Curriculum developer	**I**	**E**	**C**	**S**	**I**	**E**	**C**	**S**	**I**	**E**	**C**	**S**
Adapting programs to enterprise needs	2	2		5	1	4	2		1	1	1	
Identifying full range of needs	1	1			1	2	1		2			
Understand enterprise needs through interaction	1	3	1		1	3	1	1	2	1		
Work according to national standards									1	1		
Danger of VEs pushing own product									1			
Regular review of curriculum									1			
Instructor	**I**	**E**	**C**	**S**	**I**	**E**	**C**	**S**	**I**	**E**	**C**	**S**
Good teacher—varied teaching skills		4	9	3	1	2	4		1	1	2	2
Practical instruction and practice					1					1	2	2
Tailoring instructional needs to the workplace		1	1	1	1	2	3				1	
Be concerned about learning and transfer		1	1	3	2					1	1	
Communicates clearly with students		1		3				1				2
Need more indigenous teachers											1	
Advocate and supporter of learners	**I**	**E**	**C**	**S**	**I**	**E**	**C**	**S**	**I**	**E**	**C**	**S**
Supporter, mentor and advocate for students			1	4		1	1	2	1	1	1	2
Compassionate about students			1			1			1		2	1
Motivates students and builds interest				1		1	1	2			2	2
Understand student readiness to progress				1	1	1	1	2		1	1	1
Counselling on pathways				1		1	1					
Policy developer	**I**	**E**	**C**	**S**	**I**	**E**	**C**	**S**	**I**	**E**	**C**	**S**
Need to be aligned to and inform policy	1										1	
Lobby for schools for VET programs										1		
Aware of what is going on										1		

Curriculum developer

It was proposed that curriculum development is largely about an ability to identify the full range of enterprise needs, and then adapt/develop programs to meet this need. Frequent interactions between educators and enterprises were proposed as a means of securing an understanding of their needs. So this role in developing educational provisions was most legitimated when the focus of determining educational intent and the context of courses was posited at the enterprise level of determination—albeit guided by, or with some reference to, national standards.

Instructor

The strongest single area of support emphasised being a 'good teacher', characterised in terms of teaching methods and presentation skills. The ability to furnish opportunities to develop 'practical' skills was emphasised, as was the need to tailor instructional procedures to the exigencies of the workplace. Communicating clearly with students was also valued. Within these aspects of the role was a demand to facilitate students' learning and assist the transfer of the learnt knowledge.

Of interest was the frequency of concurrence between individual and enterprise views on the quality of instruction. It seems that the enterprises have identified concerns about the quality of teaching, in particular when this is directed towards their needs.

Advocate and supporter of learners

Community and student informants expressed a need for teachers to be compassionate towards students, and to facilitate their development through support and guidance, and through being a source of motivation. Understanding students' needs was extended to an appreciation of their readiness to progress. Being supportive of students included advice on pathways through educational provisions and concerns.

Policy developer

Industry and community informants emphasised the reciprocal relationship between policy development and teachers' practice. They emphasised teachers' involvement in formulating policy—but also being aware of and being guided in their practice by policy.

Characteristics of vocational educators

In addition to roles for vocational educators, the subjects proposed characteristics about how they should conduct themselves. These are as follows:

- content wise (having good industry knowledge, experience, spending time in the workplace, expert in the area, flexible)
- communicator
- adds value to work
- practical in approach
- professional in approach

The shift to an enterprise-based provision of vocational education was evident in the responses to the roles of vocational educators. In particular, the determination of curriculum intents (aims, goals, and objectives) was being seen, of necessity, to reflect enterprise requirements. However, the different interests of the client groups are reflected here. Even where there was an apparently common view (e.g. the role of an *instructor*), the intent differs.

Enterprises viewed the role of instruction as effectively teaching the knowledge required by the enterprise needs, and in ways that meet their employees' needs. The students' responses support the former in terms of relevance—rather than enterprise-specific learning—but the latter in the same way as enterprises. Yet it was in the *advocate* role where there was a concentration of student needs, not all of which are easily reconcilable with the characterisation of the *consultant* and *curriculum developer* roles which were so strongly proposed by enterprises.

Importantly—and almost universally—curriculum development was seen as situating curriculum at the local or enterprise level, albeit adapting industry prescriptions to enterprise needs.

Such an approach is analogous to the school-based curriculum movement (e.g. Skilbeck 1984) of two decades ago. However, the focus for a situational analysis is likely to be different for an enterprise than for a TAFE institute or other provider, given the breadth of factors that each would wish to include.

Again, from the enterprise-based view, the implementation of curriculum (instruction) was seen as a process of good teaching to realise the goals set by enterprises. Securing learners' needs was very much in terms of their ability to achieve that which had been set for them by industry and enterprise. Consideration of individuals' aspirations is very restricted here, other than the provision of advice about whether given educational or career pathways were most appropriate.

The concern here is for the robustness of the knowledge learnt and its potential for transfer. Current views suggest that ideas about generic competencies fail to define or permit transfer (Stevenson 1996; Beven 1997). Nor can it be assumed that transferable knowledge can be secured in either the classroom or the workplace without enriching the learning experiences situated in either of these settings. This may be achieved by making accessible the knowledge likely to transfer, and then advancing prospects for transfer through a consideration of the application of that knowledge to other circumstances.

The important point here is that educators have the potential to reconcile the needs of both enterprises and individuals, using a process-based approach to secure knowledge that is robust. This knowledge should assist performance in the workplace and transfer to others where similar vocational activities are being deployed. Such instructional interventions require planning, an appreciation of the formulation of educational intents and processes, careful implementation by the teacher, and solid engagement by the learners. All of these are unlikely to be secured by workplace practitioners who are unaware of these requirements, or inexperienced in the application of techniques associated with maximising transfer (Billett et al. 1998).

In the shift to an enterprise focus, the data above set out a significant change in vocational educators' roles.

Throughout the last decade of domination of the curriculum processes by industry, teachers have been valued as only 'implementers' of what has been

prepared by others and in other places. Their role was to implement with uniformity what was determined by others. Now, the demands articulated here refer to being an 'adapter', 'designer' and 'researcher' (to use Marland's categories cited in Print [1987]). Hence, the role is now to be broadened and makes greater demands on the teachers, for which they may or may not be prepared. It is unclear whether, after more than a decade of effort to secure teachers' subservience to industry mandations, vocational educators will be able to shift easily to the new roles required of them in ways that secure educational goals for all client groups.

It has been advanced that, over the past decade, vocational educators have been de-professionalised through the domination of industry on policy and practice. Now it seems that vocational educators are to be re-professionalised or that their role is changing (Seddon 1997).

However, from the data here, there remains some confusion about in whose interests they are to exercise their primary duty of concern (enterprises or individuals), and in what ways. It could be argued, from the evidence presented here, that the professional role is being recast in ways that may be contradictory. There are clear differences between those advocating the primary focus to be upon enterprise needs, and those proposing students' needs to be foremost in teachers' concerns. The shift to an enterprise focus is presenting a challenge to vocational educators that is quite unlike that faced by educators in other sectors. In doing so, it seems that there is a recasting of the professional role, to one more clearly founded on a base of potentially conflicting interests (between students' and employers' needs).

Having noted the transformation in the role for teachers, it is now appropriate to determine the ways in which key values associated with the goals of vocational education may have also changed.

Perspectives on community service obligations

Community and industry representatives were asked what they understood by the term 'community service obligations', and also about their relationship to the market. These data were gathered to gauge whether the key role in the public provision of vocational education of promoting wide access and support for those who might be disadvantaged in the labour market, still has currency with these client groups. The importance of gaining insights into this issue, and others below, was not just to appraise changing views, but also to understand better how the perspectives of emerging views are likely to impact upon vocational education. If, for instance, one view is to predominate, it is important to critically appraise this view. Equally, as other views begin to have their impact (e.g. enterprise, community) it is important to understand what values underpin their perspectives. Moreover, it was necessary to understand to what degree and in what ways these voices are 'informed'.

The data summarised in table 3.8 represent the views of industry and community informants under subheadings that state the conceptions of

community service obligations and how these were positioned in relation to the market. To the right of the responses are identified the subjects who proposed and supported these items.

Table 3.8: Conceptions of community service obligations

	PC		RC		MC	
	I	C	I	C	I	C
Selection criteria used—no community service obligation	1					1
Industry obligation with work practice	2					1
Permit access to courses	2		2	2		
Act within the community	2	3				
Addressing disadvantage: access and equity, underachievers	1	2	2	3	4	4
Accessibility to justify government funding	1	1	1			
Dual responsibility between government and recipient		1	1	1		
Aiding disadvantage is an unfair tax on all		1				
Upskill workforce		1	1		1	1
Continuance of enterprise more important than CSOs					1	
All education/training is fundamentally a CSO						1
Communicate information about VET within the community						1

The responses varied from those who provided interpretations that carried with them particular sets of values, to those who interpreted the concept of community service obligation in a particular way. Of the former, statements included those about:

- the importance of access and equity
- meeting CSO requirements as a means to qualify for government funding
- aiding the disadvantaged was an unfair tax on all

Particular interpretations referred to industry obligations in the workplace, emphasising the need for safe working practice in the food processing industry. Others interpreted the question as being associated with a community focus of 'acting within the community' or as the responsibility by the food processing industry to produce clean safe products.

This range of responses to vocational education as a community service obligation was indicative of a concept with a particular meaning which has been seen as being central to the public provision of vocational education in the past. From the time of Kangan (ACTFE 1974), the provision of vocational education has been serving a particular social purpose as another tier of education distinct from higher education.

Yet, in appraising these latter responses, three categories can be identified. These are community service obligation as:

- a direct obligation
- an indirect outcome
- de-emphasising community service obligation

Direct obligation is taken as a need to meet social disadvantage and the 'provision of access'; as individual items these were reported most frequently. *Indirect obligation* is held to include all education as a CSO, up-skilling the workforce and the dual responsibilities involved. Those views about de-

emphasising community service obligations included 'aiding disadvantage is an unfair tax on all', and those who held enterprise success to be a greater priority than CSO or a precursor to it.

Some of these interpretations suggested that, as a wider range of interests are brought to play in decision-making within VET, existing values are likely to come under challenge.

The question about appropriate balance between CSOs and the market elicited responses about concerns regarding, and support for, the market (see table 3.9). From these views, three categories of responses are evident from the community and industry informants. They are:

- concerns about the market approach
- the market has to come first
- accommodation with the market

Table 3.9: Balance between market and CSO

	PC		RC		MC	
	I	C	I	C	I	C
Legislation required to counter market excesses	1		1	1	1	
Market creates instability and disadvantage	2		2	2	2	1
Loss of focus on longer term goals	1		1			
Surplus funds only after market goals have been addressed	1		1			
Pursuit of market goals may neglect local need		1	1	3	2	1
Industry/community partnerships address needs of migrants		1				
Fight welfare mentality: only when it is relevant to industry should it be supported by the public purse		1				
Private sector success predicates ability to furnish CSO		1		1		
For VET to be viable it has to engage the market		1		1	1	
Programs not viable without public funding (VET-in-schools)		1		1		
Employer subsidies required				1		
Service industry needs—but still accessible						1
ACE is a better place to address equity needs						1
Public funding of access programs within a market system					1	

Concerns about the market approach include the use of legislation to curb market excesses, the ability of the market to create instability and disadvantage, the dependence of some programs on public funds, the loss of a focus on longer term goals, and the potential neglect of the locale. *The market has to come first* was evident in the responses about enterprise success predicating CSOs, only advancing CSOs when they are in the interests of enterprises, and only funding CSOs from what is surplus to market requirements. *Accommodation with the market* included making VET viable, the provision of employer subsidies, partnerships with industry being required to secure goals for disadvantaged, and the request to service industry's needs but still be accessible.

It seems, again, that the relationship between the role of vocational education in meeting the dual goals of the market and disadvantage are characterised by accommodation of the market. So, in opening up vocational education provisions to a wider set of views, more diverse values are evident. Some of the foundations upon which vocational education has been premised in the past are

questioned here by some of these assertions. Certainly, the idea of vocational education as a direct obligation—a community service provision—is far from being universally supported.

In the next section the concept of lifelong learning is examined from the perspective of the client groups.

Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is a term that has recently been used by government to advance its policy goals (e.g. ANTA 1998; STB 1995; DEETYA 1996). The term 'lifelong learning' was previously associated with individuals' personal development throughout their life. Now it has come to mean individuals' need to maintain the currency of their skills throughout their life (Gibbs & Macquire 1995), preferably at their own expense (Billett et al. 1997). Such a shift in the conceptualisation of this term mirrors the kinds of transformations currently taking place in public policy in western countries (Gibbs & Macquire 1995).

To understand the way this term is currently being used in the Australian community, it is useful to understand what it means to different client groups. It is also necessary to gauge the provisions available that permit individuals to maintain currency and progression, given governmental interest in this concern. Consequently, subjects representing enterprise, industry and community perspectives were asked firstly what they thought the term meant. Then they were asked how this provision was being met in current VET provisions. As with views about planning, the data here depict the views of the client groups that have had and, seemingly, are likely to continue to have, great influence over VET provisions in the future.

Table 3.10 presents collated summaries of the data from the respondents about the measures in place for skills maintenance and development to occur through individuals' lives. These responses can be categorised into *provisions*, *values* and *concerns*.

Three interpretations emerged from analysis of the responses. Firstly, the view that lifelong learning referred to 'meeting ongoing skill development needs' and the 'ability to meet changing goals' was supported by enterprise and industry respondents. Secondly, 'individuals learn throughout their lives anyway' was proposed by industry, enterprise and community representatives. Thirdly, community representatives proposed continual training and upgrading of qualifications. So it was primarily, and perhaps not surprisingly, the enterprise and industry respondents who proposed the economic viewpoint as an outcome of, and goal for, lifelong learning. Community representatives, as well as enterprises and industry, advanced learning as a continual process, rather than as an outcome.

Table 3.10: Meaning of lifelong learning

	PC			RC			MC		
Meaning of lifelong learning	**I**	**C**	**E**	**I**	**C**	**E**	**I**	**C**	**E**
Meeting ongoing skill development needs	3		3	1	3	3	3	1	3
Learning to learn and monitoring own learning	2		1						
Part of ongoing change process everyday life	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	5
Continuous learning for individual—learn all the time	2	8	2	1		1	1	3	4
Ability to meet changing goals—keeping up			3			2	1	2	1
Continual training /upgrading qualifications		3			2	2	1	3	
Learning in the workplace						1			
Not just a career				1		1			
Career paths								1	
How lifelong learning is being addressed	**I**	**C**	**E**	**I**	**C**	**E**	**I**	**C**	**E**
Combination of formal and informal learning is best	3			1				1	
Formalised structures (courses, qualifications, AQF)	3	3	5	3	1		1	3	1
Provision of opportunities			8	1	4	1		3	9
Access to modules (not certificates)	2				1				12
Individual responsibility		1	5	1					
Through recognition of prior learning	1						1		
Not addressing how to learn	1						1		
Developing a training culture	1			1		1		1	1
Formalised structures do not reflect career progression	1								1
Mandatory appraisal/in-service processes			2				1		1
Personal development			1						2
Self-directed learning			1						
Own expense			1					1	
Provisions not always available		3				1			3
Succession planning						1			
Structured learning in the workplace					1				
Access for illiterate groups and mature age students								1	
Lifelong learning built into the curriculum							1		
Constant revision of standards							1		
Re-skilling process									1
FP curriculum doesn't address lifelong learning							1		

Note: AQF–Australian Qualifications Framework.

Provisions

The existence of formal educational structures was proposed strongly by representatives of all three groups. Added to this were strategies such as recognition of prior learning (RPL), self-directed learning, combinations of on- and off-the-job provisions, mandated enterprise-based processes, and the development of training cultures within enterprises. These provisions of securing and managing lifelong learning were supported by all three groups of informants. At one extreme, these provisions are linked to individuals' progress within enterprises.

> *Linking performance appraisal with training and development—structured processes to determine and rectify personal and organisational deficiencies* (E1)

Values

The values underpinning how lifelong learning provisions should be realised are of three kinds. These are:

- the provision of opportunities

- individuals' responsibilities
- to be undertaken at the individuals' own expense

Even the response for personal development was furnished with an interest to develop the interpersonal skills required for the workplace.

Concerns

The concerns expressed by respondents referred to:

- the inability of formal structures (qualifications and formalised courses) to reflect individuals' career progression
- a lack of emphasis on 'learning to learn' skills
- provisions not being available
- a concern that access to modules rather than complete courses was happening

These concerns were advanced particularly by community and industry informants.

The last two concerns relate particularly to the food processing sector where the availability of modules is often at the employer's discretion. Those modules deemed not to be required by the enterprise are not always available to employees. This situation has led to a concern about the low numbers of individuals actually completing the CFP compared with those who have completed modules. The concern here is that an enterprise-focused approach may inhibit or make impossible access to ongoing opportunities for advancement. If employment is a requirement to progress in courses, there will inevitably be inequities and barriers to individuals' progression. The issue of the failure of the formal provisions to meet career path needs is also noteworthy. One of the community respondents stated that these arrangements did not reflect needs of the individuals' career paths.

> *It doesn't—people don't do it that way. They branch out into other areas, and training for this is not available.* (C6)

The data presented above, and discussions about the findings, have indicated different patterns of the way current VET provisions are conceptualising the ongoing developmental needs of client groups, and how those needs should be met.

Strong support from graduates, reported in table 3.21, about the quality of TAFE provisions, is reflected in the views of some enterprise, community, industry and student informants. That is, there is strong support by all client groups for the provision of vocational education provided by TAFE institutions. Yet it is also clear that an orthodoxy is emerging, focused on enterprise-specific arrangements. Even a community representative with an interest in provisions for migrants was framing responses in terms of enterprise and economic utility. It seems that only when VET provisions for migrants were also meeting enterprise needs were they wholly legitimate.

However, just as concerns about this shift were evident in how planning for VET should best proceed, and how teachers' roles should be thought about, this was also the case for the ongoing career progression of individuals within the region. In the concept of lifelong learning, it seems to have become linked with economic goals. The means to secure this ongoing learning are through making provisions available, with an emphasis upon individuals making at least some kind of contribution to their development. Most of the enterprise-based courses had arrangements requiring individuals to contribute something to their vocational development. Not surprisingly, the subjects involved in these types of arrangements were looking beyond their present positions and enterprises to see a return on their commitment. Some subjects were concerned that the enterprise-specific nature of the program, and the lack of interaction with other students outside the enterprise, were inhibiting the quality of what they learn, as well as its application elsewhere.

So, these learners are seeking returns beyond those that the enterprise is currently able to furnish. Hence, it seems that as their learning has become associated with economic goals, they have adopted a strategic and utility-based view of educational provisions. Hence, it seems that at a number of levels the utility of vocational education has been acknowledged.

However, linkages between lifelong learning and maintaining skill currency are problematic, given the differences in opportunities being furnished. For instance, the commonest response from enterprises was to make available opportunities for employees. However, significant differences in the levels of opportunities were likely to be offered according to the size and nature of the enterprise. One ex-student exemplified these concerns stating that such was the low level of technology being used by her employer that she was concerned about maintaining the currency of her skills.

Conceptions of expertise

As has been proposed above, if there is to be a shift to an enterprise focus for vocational education, it is useful to understand enterprise needs. In order to determine the kinds of learning outcomes required for performance in enterprises and to identify some of the variables across enterprises, representatives were asked to state what it meant to be an expert in their workplace. The purpose behind this question was to identify, where possible, what is required of expertise—then the requirements of VET provisions for enterprises can be gauged more closely. The assumption here is that developing this expertise is the key goal for vocational education.

In table 3.11 the responses have been summarised. In the left column, the required characteristics of expertise are listed. In the right-hand columns the frequencies of respondents to these characteristics are detailed by region. In the rural centre region, six enterprise respondents were accessed, while in the other two sites ten enterprise respondents were accessed.

Table 3.11: Expertise from an enterprise perspective

	PC	RC	MC
Multi-skilled/multi-functional	5	2	5
Skilled in specific 'technical' tasks	6	3	4
Interpersonally and organisationally skilled	5	4	4
Pride in product	1		
Predicting and fixing up problems	5		1
Internal need for experts—competence is all that is required			11
Acceptance of change	2		
Productive	1	3	3
Understanding processes and product (monitoring)	2	3	2
Working co-operatively	2	2	
Passing on skills	2		
Work safely		2	
Work autonomously		2	
Adopt wider responsibilities		1	
Being sought out by others	1		
Supervisory and management skills			1

The attributes summarised in this table can be categorised in terms of:

- knowledge types
- disposition
- peer recognition

Knowledge types

The requirements to be specifically skilled and multi-skilled, as well as to be able to monitor and respond to problems, demands that workers in these enterprises have rich knowledge bases associated with their vocational activities—comprising propositional and procedural knowledge at both specific and higher order levels. This knowledge is what permits specific tasks to be undertaken in the workplace. It also permits workers to apply their knowledge across the workplace in different situations and circumstances. For example, being broadly skilled is likely to require a wide range of specific knowledge, that comes from extended practice in the areas of work where the multi-skilling is required.

It is likely that the 'activity systems' (Engestrom 1993) of enterprises will be unique, as the factors of practice are such that variations are quite likely across enterprises. What passes for expertise in one enterprise may be quite inappropriate in another. To be able to monitor, predict and have a rich understanding of work practice demands careful identification and consideration. Hence, extended periods of practice are likely to be required, as the opportunities to develop robust forms of knowledge are required to permit the transfer of the knowledge. Developing these kinds of knowledge will also require access to instructional strategies that press the learner into thinking (Stevenson & McKavanagh 1994), as well as making accessible knowledge that is difficult to learn.

Dispositions

Dispositional attributes—including pride in practice, working co-operatively, and acceptance of change—are all identified as underpinning expert performance. Although required in different ways across different settings, these values are richly associated with the knowledge types. For instance, how something is conceptualised—considered worth doing a decent job upon—is essentially dispositional. That is, the values of particular circumstances emphasise the rich association between dispositions and the knowledge types identified above.

Peer recognition

Peer recognition is an indication of peers' perceptions of an individual's competence. In this case it has been stated that 'being sought out by others' is an acknowledgement of competence. Such acknowledgement is likely to arise out of the individual's possession of the two kinds of attributes outlined above. It is these attributes which permit performance.

To develop the first two sets of attributes identified above takes:

- time
- practice with both routine and non-routine activities
- access to expertise or guidance
- potentially a structured approach to learning

Combinations of on- and off-the-job types of VET provisions are likely to be able to secure these forms of knowledge. The on-the-job experiences provide access to a range of knowledge and guidance in the workplace that can assist the learners' construction of that knowledge. On-the-job experiences, when supported by instructional strategies suited for the workplace, have the potential to assist much of this development (Billett et al. 1998). Alternatively, off-the-job experiences may be effective to secure understandings that are not apparent or accessible in the workplace.

One confounding factor is that the goals for performance are likely to be quite situational, and vary from workplace to workplace. However, it seems that it is difficult to learn broadly transferable knowledge in one setting (e.g. the college classroom), and expect that this knowledge will transfer. More likely, knowledge secured richly in one context needs to be abstracted from that context to another. This suggests that extensive experiences are required in one context, with assistance being provided for the learner to appreciate what is transferable to other circumstances, and what level of transfer can reasonably be expected. Also, particular strategies need to be considered. An enhanced role for educators was not only suggested, but also the importance of their skills in developing robust knowledge in their students.

Consequently, whether individuals are learning in the workplace or the classroom, provisions need to account for the forms of knowledge required for expertise. An issue here is that the forms of knowledge required and identified by the enterprises, as stated above, will not be realised by curriculum provisions

that focus on content alone, nor behavioural outcome focused measures of performance.

By focusing at least part of curriculum provisions at the workplace level, there is the opportunity to develop further understandings about what is situationally important, and what knowledge is more broadly applicable. By being able to identify the variance of the situational factors that underpin expertise, it may be possible to maximise transfer by indicating to learners the breadth of performance that comprises expertise—rather than one singular and supposedly objective view.

Given the focus on enterprises and their need to negotiate curriculum and, in some cases, develop the capacity to offer VET provisions to their employees, the nature of productive relationships between enterprises and providers needs to be considered.

Enterprises' negotiation of curriculum and partnerships with providers

Enterprise informants were asked about how best they should negotiate curriculum with providers, and the sorts of qualities that would encourage them to enter into partnerships with providers. The motive for posing this question was to determine whether it is possible to reconcile a number of interests and needs through negotiated arrangements with providers such as TAFE, with these negotiations being founded upon a partnership between provider and enterprise. Such arrangements are held to underpin the maturity of vocational education provisions in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (OECD 1994b). Although there are quite different antecedent conditions in those countries, it was proposed in earlier work (Billett et al. 1997) that there is potential for establishing collaborative arrangements based on mutuality of interests and respect at the regional level. Given that collaboration has been identified as something desirable by the community informants, this would seem to meet regional needs as well.

Table 3.12 provides tabulated summaries of enterprise responses to these questions. In the left column are the summarised and aggregated responses to issues of negotiation, and below these are those associated with partnerships. In the columns to the right are the frequencies with which enterprises referred to these items.

Table 3.12: Enterprises' negotiation of curriculum and partnerships with providers

Negotiation of curriculum	PC	RC	MC
Local expert committees	1	3	
Individual negotiation with providers (TAFE) (small business preference)	5	5	4
Corporate negotiations	1	1	3
Internal training, planning and procurement	1		
Enterprise partnership	**PC**	**RC**	**MC**
Timely meeting our needs	1		1
Understanding our perspective/needs	5	2	5
Understanding needs of provider and enterprise	3	3	2
Maximising strengths within enterprise	2		
Tailored curriculum, flexible access			5
Already have partnership			3

The majority of enterprises supported the idea that local negotiations are feasible. Moreover, the majority held that these were to be done directly with providers such as TAFE. Other views, which suggest more indirect negotiations, were those from enterprises governed by centralised (head office) decision-making on matters associated with training. One enterprise suggested that these decisions were likely to be associated with internal planning and purchasing, which may sit uneasily with negotiated arrangements.

The factors identified as encouraging partnerships between enterprises and providers were seen as being useful if such arrangements could:

- provide timely training
- be premised on a detailed understanding of the enterprise's need
- maximise the contributions of the enterprise

In each region, some enterprise respondents stressed mutuality of needs in such a partnership. That is, such an arrangement needs to build upon what can be done to maximise both partners' contribution. This includes an acknowledgement of inhibiting factors (e.g. constraints of shift work, constraints of tiny groups of learners).

In sum, the form of, and prospects for, partnerships between enterprises and providers appears likely to differ across enterprises, with larger enterprises more likely to engage than smaller units. Equally, the two industries selected for this study offer quite different prospects of what kind of partnerships are likely across industry sectors. Where you have large numbers of individuals working under the same roof, engaged in similar activities, the prospects are more likely to be met than in those where the tasks performed by employees are quite different from each other. Significantly, most of the partnerships were not based on shared concerns, but market-based relationships of user and provider.

Increasing investment in training

As with the need to understand what outcomes enterprises wish to secure for their needs, it is important to understand what will motivate them to increase their commitment to training. Such insights may be useful in understanding how best to arrest the current collapse in the commitment by enterprises to VET throughout Australia.

Enterprise informants were asked what would encourage their enterprises to increase their expenditure in training. It should be acknowledged that most of the large enterprises claimed to be already expending significant funds on VET. However, the responses illustrate some of the values that might influence these enterprises to participate more in training now.

The most common response was associated with furnishing evidence that it would enhance productivity. Other responses were associated with external (legislative) changes or internal demands (restructuring). Most of the large enterprises suggested that their current efforts fulfiled the skill development needs of the workforce, and that only the demands just outlined would encourage them to participate more.

However, other enterprises at different stages of development did foreshadow that changes in production processes and technologies may pre-empt some changes. There was little evidence of a conscious plan to skill for the future—to develop further the skills of workers beyond immediate needs (with one possible exception). The data here seem to confirm other concerns about the role of enterprises in maintaining or developing the nation's workforce. These include the downturn in enterprise commitment to sponsoring apprenticeships and their preference for short-term entry-level training options such as traineeships.

At this time, it seems enterprise priorities are capricious and inwardly focused, and cannot be relied upon alone to furnish the skill base of Australia.

Table 3.13: Factors which would encourage enterprises to invest more in VET

	PC	RC	MC
Organisational change/restructure	2	4	3
Legislative changes	3	4	2
Knowing a productive outcome would result	5		
Access and availability	1	1	
Changes in technology	1		
Convincing appraisal of needs and programs to address those needs	1		
Growth in business	1		
Developing skills further	1		
New products		2	
Shared contribution		1	
More time and resources			1

Changing relationships

In the section above, data have been presented and analysed in order to determine whether there is a shift to an enterprise focus within current VET practice, and, if so, how this shift is likely to be consonant with the needs of the other client groups. From this analysis it is evident that there is a change in relationships within VET, suggesting that the needs of enterprises are gaining prominence over those of industry. This is evident in current changes within vocational education provisions, as well as perceptions and expectations that enterprises' needs are legitimate and deserving.

This shift in focus has consequences for decision-making associated with the nature and quality of provisions. Moreover, it seems that not only enterprise advocates are supporting this shift. With qualifications, industry, community and individual informants support this shift and the values associated with it. Of these, the latter (individuals) have the most qualification. Beyond transformations in the expectations of teachers' practice, these values are advancing a platform of ideas about how curriculum intents are to be negotiated and implemented, the nature of community service obligations and lifelong learning.

However, qualifications about, and discordance within, the data presented above indicate the depth and diversity of the current values within VET. The enterprise focus privileges a view of curriculum planning that reflects particular

sectoral interests—presumably, at least in part, at a cost to others. The needs of other client groups are not always readily or easily aligned with these particular interests. Concerns about specificity and the reactive nature of the enterprise focus were raised in reference to its likely impact, and of a planning approach which denies other voices. Equally, the roles and expectations of vocational educators are not always easily reconciled between the demands of enterprises and those, for instance, of students. Even community interests, which are often aligned to enterprise requirements, are not wholly consonant with the enterprise perspectives. Where it exists, enterprise funding of their own VET provisions adds legitimacy to their demands for customised and specific provisions. Coincidentally, marketplace considerations and demands are making the provisions such as those offered by TAFE more reactive to the needs of enterprises.

All this suggests that, in different ways, the decision-making within VET provisions and curriculum is being transformed by factors associated with the market. The concern is whether these are in the best interests of all client groups.

In order to appraise more fully how the current provisions of VET are meeting the needs of the individuals accessing these provisions, the next section provides an analysis of data about the current vocational education provisions in each of the regions.

Section 3: A profile of graduates in each region

The data on individuals' participation in vocational education and training in the three regions are of two kinds: those derived from the GDS, which are general in kind, and those from the surveys and focus groups administered specifically for this project. The former is global data, drawn from graduates of the local institutes of TAFE who responded to the GDS, a nationally funded study of the satisfaction with TAFE provisions. The second set of data is from respondents for enterprises, industry and students associated with the clerical and food processing industries, and those who are representatives of the regional communities.

In this section, data of a general kind about the provision of VET through TAFE institutes are provided and discussed. In some places, reference is made to the consistency between the GDS respondents and those surveyed specifically for this project.

Profile of participants

From the GDS, profiles of the TAFE students in these regions can be constructed. These profiles comprise:

- information about the students
- their positions within the industries in which they are employed
- their reasons for doing the course
- satisfaction with the course

As mentioned earlier, the conventions adopted here are to identify the institutes by their codes. PCIT#1 and PCIT#2 are the two TAFE institutes that exist within the provincial centre. RCIT and MCIT are, respectively, the institutes of TAFE in the rural and metropolitan regions.

Demographic data from the GDS from each of the three regions are provided in table 3.14a. In the left column are demographic factors. In the columns to its right are those reporting data from the four institutes with the equivalent State data in parenthesis. In the far right column is the Australian average or median.

What this table states is that the median age of graduates differs across the institutes and within the States. For example, the median age at PCIT#1 was eight years higher than the State median.

Table 3.14a: Demographic and equity access groups (GDS 1997)

	PCIT#1	(st)	PCIT#2	(st)	RCIT	(st)	MCIT	(st)	Aust.
Median age of graduates	34	(26)	30	(29)	29	(28)	32	(31)	28
Percentage of women graduates	62	(53)	64	(58)	49	(48)	57	(60)	56
Percentage of graduates from ATSI backgrounds	3	(1)	2	(1)	0	(1)	1	(3)	1
Percentage of graduates from NESB backgrounds	10	(36)	14	(35)	10	(23)	44	(26)	32
Percentage with disability	5	(6)	6	(6)	6	(6)	6	(7)	6
Percentage unemployed prior to commencing course	13	(22)	16	(18)	12	(17)	20	(22)	18
Country of birth									
Australia	89%	(74%)	89%	(72%)	94%	(82%)	55%	(73%)	(74%)
Main English speaking countries	8%	(5%)	4%	(6%)	4%	(9%)	8%	(9%)	(7%)
Other countries (NESB)	3%	(20%)	6%	(22%)	2%	(9%)	37%	(18%)	(19%)

Note:
ATSI–Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
NESB–non-English speaking background.
(st)–States.
Sources: GDS surveys for the four institutes.

Equally, there were differences in the percentages of women graduates at both regional and State levels. The highest level was at PCIT#2 (64%) and the lowest at RCIT (49%). The variation in these figures suggests factors that have either supported or inhibited women's access to VET provisions are not consistent across the regions.

In a similar way, the percentage of ATSI and NESB graduates differed across regions and States. For example, at MCIT the level was higher than the State average, whereas this was not the case for the three other institutes. Almost the converse was the case for ATSI graduates.

Levels of graduates for students with disability were the most consistent across regions and States.

Levels of unemployment prior to undertaking the course also differed across the regions.

All this suggests that factors associated with the gender, racial, ethnic and employment backgrounds of the graduates vary across regions, and between regions and States. It cannot be deduced from this type of data whether the graduate data reflect the composition of the regions' population, or merely those who were able to complete their courses. The data provide accounts of outcomes, rather than opportunities afforded. Certainly, evidence elsewhere suggests that migrant learners failed regularly to complete courses when they were 'mainstream'—that is, without additional support. However, from the data in table 3.14a, it is evident that there are differences in student cohorts within the regions and between regions and State or national comparisons.

The subjects surveyed specifically for this study conform approximately to the gender mix evident in the GDS, as indicated in table 3.14b.

Table 3.14b: Gender of surveyed students

	MC	PC	RC
Male	39 (25%)	58 (29%)	61 (37%)
Female	119 (75%)	142 (71%)	163 (63%)

Employment destination of graduates

Data on the kinds of industries in which the graduates were employed in each of the regions are presented in table 3.15. The left column identifies the TAFE institute; the three right-hand columns indicate the three most common industry sectors within which graduates from that institute have found employment.

Table 3.15: Industries into which graduates were most likely to be employed at 30 May 1997

Institute	Most	Second most	Third most
PCIT#1	42% Health and community services	18% Manufacturing	10% Government, administration and defence
RCIT	37% Agriculture	15% Manufacturing	9% Retail
MCIT	21% Health and community services	15% Retail	10% Accommodation, cafés
PCIT#2	17% Retail trade	12% Manufacturing	10% Health and community services

Sources: GDS surveys for the four institutes.

This table depicts diversity in employment outcomes across the regions—and, in one instance, across institutes within regions. It also suggests different patterns of concentration of employment opportunities in regions. For example, at PCIT#1 70 per cent of the graduates were employed in three industry sectors, whereas it was 46 per cent at MCIT and 39 per cent for the wide area encompassed by the PCIT#2. So, more than differences in kinds of industries, the scope for employment also differs.

Data about the occupational groups where graduates of the four institutes have found employment are depicted in table 3.16. Again, this table identifies the institute and the occupational groups in which graduates were employed. These data do not inform about the ability of TAFE provisions to secure these

categories of employment, merely the outcomes realised by graduates. A combination of employment options and course provisions are probably evident in this data. For example, MCIT graduates typically exit with an associate diploma, whereas the common qualification at the other institutes is a certificate (see table 3.18). Also, the high percentage of tradespersons reported at PCIT#2 has to reflect course provisions, as this employment area is regulated.

Table 3.16: Most common occupational groups for graduates employed at 30 May 1997

Institute	Most	Second most	Third most
PCIT#1	22% Para-professionals	20% Salespersons and personal services workers	18% Labourers and related workers
RCIT	23% Managers	19% Labourers	18% Tradespersons
MCIT	27% Salespersons and personal services	22% Para-professional	12% Professionals
PCIT#2	24% Tradespersons	18% Clerks	18% Salespersons and personal service

Note:
Occupations are based on Australian Standards Classification of Occupation (ASCO) codes.
Sources: GDS surveys for the four institutes.

The data above indicate a diversity of circumstances in each of the regions in terms of graduate characteristics, the employment options available and the classification of work types. This suggests that vocational education provisions are accounting for these differences in some ways that are quite effective (e.g. high levels of women graduates). It also suggests that these differences, being regional, need to be accounted for at the regional level where they can best be understood, and strategies adopted to meet needs appropriately.

Graduates and employment

The employment outcomes for graduates are compared in this section. Table 3.17 presents data from the GDS, indicating their employment status and their expectations associated with employment. From this table, quite different patterns of employment outcomes are evident.

Graduates from the rural and provincial centres enjoyed levels of employment that were on par with, or higher than, national levels, whereas those in the metropolitan region fared below the national levels. There is also an association between expectations (the last set of percentages and outcomes in table 3.17), which might partially explain this outcome. That is, graduates indicating employment as their key goal for participation in the course did so at lower levels at MCIT than at other institutes. Hence, the reasons individuals gave for doing courses differed across regions, as did the outcome of their participation.

In sum, graduates from RCIT were very likely to be employed at the end of their course, having been unemployed at its commencement, and as such realised their goal for doing the course. Conversely, graduates from MCIT were less likely to be employed than those at RCIT, but also less likely to be unemployed at the commencement of the course. Yet they had lower levels of interest in gaining employment at the end of the course. These data are useful for two

reasons. Firstly, they indicate the different prospects for employment in the regions. Secondly, they indicate levels of employment realised by graduates in the three regions.

Table 3.17: Employment summary data (institute, State, national comparison)

Percentage of graduates	PCIT#1 (st)	PCIT#2 (st)	RCIT (st)	MCIT (st)	Aust.
Employed	77% (71%)	70% (71%)	86% (79%)	61% (67%)	71%
Unemployed	13% (17%)	14% (15%)	9% (12%)	20% (19%)	15%
Unemployed before commencing their TAFE course, found work by 30/5/97	41% (46%)	52% (45%)	71% (57%)	36% (41%)	46%
Main reason for doing the course 'to get a job' (or own business) —employed by 30/5/97	60% (61%)	64% (59%)	71% (66%)	49% (57%)	61%

Note:
(st)–State.
Sources: GDS surveys for the four institutes.

Awards and modes

From the GDS, data about the level of award and modes of vocational education provision are identifiable for each of the institutions (table 3.18a). The most common awards were certificates at three of the four institutes, and associate diploma at the metropolitan institute. 'Classes at college' was nominated as the most common method of delivery at all four institutes; this varied from being typical (52%) at RCIT, to being the dominant mode at MCIT (86%).

Table 3.18a: Course details, outcomes and benefits

Course details	PCIT#1	RCIT	PCIT#2	MCIT
Most common qualification	Certificate	Certificate	Certificate	Associate Diploma
Main method of delivery	Classes at college (64%)	Classes at college (52%)	Classes at college (86%)	Classes at college (82%)

Sources: GDS surveys for the four institutes.

In table 3.18b, the data from the food processing and clerical studies students surveyed for this study are presented. These students provide more detail about the modes of study, and are broadly consistent with the data from the GDS. However, a key difference is that in the rural and regional centres there were courses offered wholly on the job, whereas in the metropolitan area none were reported.

Table 3.18b: Modes of study

	MC		PC		RC	
Wholly at college	133	(94%)	89	(56%)	78	(62%)
On the job			37	(23%)	15	(12%)
Both college and workplace	7	(5%)	21	(36%)	29	(23%)
Other	2	(1%)	11	(7%)	4	(3%)
Total	**142**		**158**		**126**	

Sources: GDS surveys for the four institutes.

This finding can be linked to earlier data about shorter courses being undertaken in the workplace, and the typical awards across the institutes differing in level. Perhaps this table furnishes evidence of a continuing divide between shorter duration courses being based in the workplace, and longer ones in the educational institutions.

Such a divide has a number of concerns associated with it. Firstly, access to some courses will be increasingly premised on employment, as under the structured entry-level approach in apprenticeships and traineeships. However, and secondly, the key growth in VET provisions, in at least some States, is in the higher-associate diploma courses (STB 1997). Consequently, there is the danger of further divisions in the kinds of learning experiences being offered to individuals participating in VET. It would seem, on the basis of evidence and perceptions, that an integrated approach of both on- and off-the-job experiences are likely to be the most useful for developing students' ability to develop and adapt their vocational knowledge.

Measures of satisfaction

Graduates' responses to measures of satisfaction with course provisions and their outcomes are presented in tables 3.19 through to 3.21.

Overall, graduates' responses to these measures are very positive. There is some variation between the institutes, but key measures of satisfaction are shared at high levels. In particular, measures that are attributable to the activities and performance of the institutions and teachers are generally reported very positively. Interestingly, those factors that had less than State or national average levels of performance are attributable to factors outside of the direct influence of educators or the educational institutions. It seems from the data in the tables below that, in most of the areas where TAFE institutes and their teachers could be held accountable, the graduates highly value the contribution made by the TAFE institutes and staff.

Table 3.19 presents the data from graduates on five measures of satisfaction associated with their courses. Overwhelmingly, the graduates claimed to have undertaken their courses for vocational reasons. An almost equally high percentage of students reported that they:

- had achieved their purposes
- had enjoyed benefits from completing the course
- thought the course was either relevant or highly relevant

These overall positive measures are also evident in table 3.20, which details the satisfaction reported above in greater detail. This table draws again on data from the GDS to indicate perceived benefits from the courses and their relevance. In the left column are benefits which graduates might seek from course participation. To the right of this column are percentages of graduates from each institute who studied full time (part-time percentage reported in parentheses).

Table 3.19: Satisfaction outcomes

% of graduates	PCIT#1 (st)	PCIT#2 (st)	RCIT (st)	MCIT (st)	Aust.
Cited vocational reasons as their main purpose for doing the course	82% (78%)	70% (75%)	84% (84%)	74% (79%)	77%
Claimed they achieved or partly achieved, their reasons for doing the course	76% (77%)	79% (75%)	87% (80%)	77% (77%)	78%
Did the course for vocational reasons and felt they had experienced improvements in remuneration, promotion or desired job	53% (65%)	59% (62%)	68% (68%)	62% (59%)	64%
Main reason for taking the course was vocational, and were employed and thought the course was either relevant or somewhat relevant	81% (80%)	77% (78%)	85% (82%)	77% (77%)	79%

Note:
(st)–State.
Sources: GDS surveys for the four institutes.

Table 3.20: Benefits from participation

Benefits	PCIT#1 ft (pt)	RCIT ft (pt)	PCIT#2 ft (pt)	MCIT ft (pt)
Increase in earnings	35% (38%)	44% (13%)	35% (18%)	37% (22%)
Promotion	28% (15%)	32% (–)	24% (9%)	22% (13%)
Change of job/new job	24% (45%)	30% (27%)	25% (27%)	29% (29%)
Any of the above benefits	53% (68%)	68% (37%)	59% (38%)	62% (45%)
None of above benefits	47% (32%)	31% (63%)	40% (61%)	37% (54%)
Graduates' belief about relevance of the course				
Highly or of some relevance to their job	81%	85%	77%	77%
Very little or no relevance to their job	13%	11%	20%	19%

Sources: GDS surveys for the four institutes.

Perhaps most noteworthy in the data within this latter table are the low levels of graduates, particularly part-time graduates, who claimed they have received any of the employment benefits of participating in the course. Yet there was generally very strong support for the relevance of the course. What these data suggest is conflict between the perceived utility of the course and how this related to employment outcomes. The point here is that judgements about TAFE provisions cannot be made by considering one element of the demand-side equation—that is, whether graduates secure employment, promotions, etc. These factors are not directly relational to the quality of the VET provision.

Moreover, the graduates' positive measures of the relevance of the provisions are contrary to the perceptions of some enterprise and industry informants. These informants have stated in a number of places in the case studies that the performance of TAFE and its teachers, and in particular the relevance of what they teach, is questionable. However, when pressed to provide evidence, it was often lacking. The measures of relevance above, and the ones below, counter some of the negative perceptions of enterprise and industry informants.

The GDS gathered measures of satisfaction (ratings) of 11 aspects of the graduates' courses. These data are presented in table 3.21. The left-hand column in this table contains items referring to aspects of the course. In the four columns to its right are the percentages for each of the institutes. The percentage without brackets is for a rating of eight, nine or ten out of ten, and those in brackets between ratings between four and seven out of ten.

The highest grades are consistently for the teachers' knowledge and the overall quality of the course. Areas less positively appraised are associated with advice and information on courses and jobs.

Table 3.21: Graduates' ratings of aspects of courses

	Rated 8–10 (rated 4–7)			
	PCIT#1	RCIT	PCIT#2	MCIT
Instructors' knowledge of course content	81% (18%)	79% (19%)	81% (17%)	72% (25%)
Overall quality of course	77% (22%)	74% (25%)	77% (22%)	60% (38%)
Convenience of venue and class times	73% (25%)	67% (29%)	73% (23%)	57% (38%)
Making assessment methods clear	67% (31%)	70% (26%)	72% (25%)	59% (36%)
Presentation of course material	63% (35%)	63% (35%)	63% (35%)	52% (43%)
Usefulness of course to job	69% (35%)	76% (19%)	67% (28%)	54% (36%)
Content reflecting industry practice	63% (26%)	65% (33%)	64% (33%)	54% (38%)
Quality of equipment	64% (34%)	63% (33%)	64% (33%)	48% (44%)
Balance between instruction and practice	57% (39%)	63% (34%)	62% (35%)	50% (45%)
Information received when choosing course, subjects and modules	58% (39%)	63% (30%)	60% (34%)	43% (47%)
Information about careers and jobs available	42% (47%)	43% (45%)	41% (43%)	36% (45%)

Sources: GDS surveys for the four institutes.

These measures of graduate satisfaction are useful in highlighting the aggregated perceptions of graduates at the institutes, who comprise a key VET client group. The ratings indicate that graduates believe their course provisions to be well organised, their teachers knowledgeable, and their courses relevant. Where ratings are not as high as others, they are attributable to the provision of information to inform choice of courses and subjects, and also links between courses and employment outcomes.

One institute (MCIT) had lower levels of reported satisfaction than the others. However, as indicated in earlier tables, this institute has a greater diversity of student types and reported goals. That is, the participation by NESB students was far higher than at the other institutes, there was a greater diversity of offerings, and the reasons why students stated they wanted to study there were different from the others. In the area of food processing, it was reported that the reason for many of the students undertaking the course at this TAFE institute was to gain access to higher education.

So, overall, the graduates who responded to the GDS overwhelmingly supported the quality of the TAFE provisions offered through these institutes.

That is, one client group (individuals) expressed high levels of satisfaction at the way the VET provisions—as offered through TAFE institutes—have satisfied their needs.

Measures of satisfaction were also elicited in the interviews and focus groups specifically conducted for this project for all four client groups. In the next section, summaries of data from all four client groups are presented and discussed.

Client groups' needs and satisfaction with VET provisions: 'What is' versus 'what should be'

This section comprises a synthesis of data from the interviews, focus groups and student surveys on how the current provisions of vocational education are meeting the needs of the four client groups. It aggregates and compares the data in the case studies.

Data were gathered in order to determine how each of the client groups' needs, interests and aspirations were currently being realised through the existing provisions of vocational education—that is, in what ways were their needs being met and not being met, thereby providing data on 'what is'.

Next, in order to be informed about their requirements of the vocational education system, the informants were asked to identify their needs, in the form of their aspirations and ideals.

The following section presents and discusses the responses to these questions. In the case studies these data are dealt with separately. Here they are combined in a synthesis which compares 'what is' with 'what should be', and then attempts a reconciliation of the client groups' needs. To arrive at the synthesis provided below, the data from the three regions as furnished in the case studies were initially aggregated. Having realised this aggregation, a further synthesis was undertaken between the two sets of data, eliciting what the clients want from the VET system and how these needs are being currently realised.

Table 3.22 provides a synthesis of the data. The table is divided into two sections, one dealing with processes of VET provisions, and the other dealing with outcomes—that is, the desired processes within VET identified by the client groups (industry, enterprises, region and individual) and the outcomes they want. In the left-hand column, statements of need are presented. These have been synthesised from the interviews, focus group and survey data. As stated, these needs are categorised into those that refer to processes and outcomes. To the right of this column are four others that indicate whether or not each client group identified this need. So, for some instances, 'having competent teachers' is a need identified by all four groups, whereas 'external auditing and reliability of assessment' is identified only by industry. In the next two columns are the summaries of the data that indicate ways in which these needs are reported as either being met or not being met. In parentheses, after each statement about how a need is being secured, the frequency with which informants of the client groups have advanced views about the meeting of needs is indicated.

Table 3.22: Comparing client groups' needs, and how these are being met

Needs associated with processes of VET provisions	I	E	C	S	How those needs are being met	How those needs are *not* being met
Courses which are current, relevant, cost-effective and flexible	✓	✓	✓	✓	Traineeships permit greater access (1C); operator level courses flexible varied and accessible (8I, 8E); TAFE excellent (3E), good (6C), adequacy of provision (3E); self-pacing useful (2S); negotiated learning arrangements (2S); well served by educational institutions (8C); meeting needs well (8I)	Need to access individual modules (1E); inadequacies of distance provisions (E3, 6S); greater access to teachers (1E, 1C); materials not ready or well prepared (2S); inconsistency in TAFE provisions (2E); duplication of content (4S); practical learning (1C); pre-testing of skills to advance credit (1S)
Having competent teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓	Flexible and accommodating (8C); supportive (2C)	Teachers' expertise lacking (2I, 3E)
Having mechanisms which address enterprise needs within industry frameworks	✓				Separate course for each sector (I2)	Differentials in training among industries (1C); training programs eroding industry framework (1I); non-completion of certificates in work-based programs (4I)
Infrastructure to provide quality courses	✓			✓	Useful integration of on- and off-job components (E2)	Lack of integration between on- and off-job components (3E)
External auditing and reliability of assessment	✓					Failure of quality control (2I)
Courses customised to enterprise needs		✓			Addressing enterprise (6I, 5E); on-the-job assessment (1I) and learning (8E, 7S); integrated with work activities (6S); group learning supported (4S)	Not enough customisation (4I, 7E) and variation in success (4E); teamwork (1E); TAFE not aware of (3C) or addressing enterprise needs (3C); lack of alignment between VET and industry (2I); lack of genuine options (2E); unavailability of specific provisions (4E); cost inhibits access (1S); not addressing needs of learners (1I, 3E, 1S); short courses suit enterprise more than learners (1E); demands on self (1S); workplace colleagues (3S); not enough indigenous teachers (1C); non-completion of certificates in work-based programs (4I)
Courses addressing individual (employee) needs		✓	✓	✓	Addressing student needs (4I, 6S)	
Capacity to offer in-house		✓				
High levels of interaction with providers		✓			Collaboration useful (E4); VET in schools and links with TAFE (2C)	
Competition among providers		✓			Growth of private providers (1C)	Too many providers dilute quality (2E)

Needs associated with processes of VET provisions	I	E	C	S	How those needs are being met	How those needs are *not* being met
Consultation with and interaction among providers (teachers) and local community			✓			Lack of promotion of VET in community (1C)
Responsive to local needs			✓		Addressing local (1C) needs	Geographical dispersion (7C); young people have to leave area (1C); distance to travel (2S); too many providers dilute quality (2E); not enough VET in schools (2C)
Skilled workforce (flexible, self-directed, safe, certificated)	✓				Theoretical understanding (E4); certification (5S); transferable skills (2S)	Lack of underpinning knowledge (1I); not taught to learn how to learn (1S)
Wider participation, especially by small enterprises	✓	✓	✓		Incentives subsidise training (1E)	Delivery to small and remote businesses (3I); current funding inhibiting small business participation (1E); participation of small business (3C); employers not participating in ELT (7C) or training casual workers (1C)
Career pathways for workers	✓					
Specific job-ready skills (technical, organisational, personal and attitudinal)		✓			Basic skills learnt at TAFE (12E); improves confidence and skills (2S)	Beyond technical needs—other less measurable outcomes (3E)
Measurable outcomes relevant to improving business		✓	✓			
Accredited courses	✓	✓	✓	✓	Certification (5S)	
Learning new and updating knowledge				✓	Focus on learning (E1)	
Realising employment, self-employment, career goals			✓		TAFE viewed positively by job seekers (2C)	Course levels discourage access (2C, 3S); accessing work placements (1S); cost inhibits access (1S); longer and more thorough period of initial preparation (6S); lack of information (1S); not enough workplace training available (1C); courses being accessed by students with no other options (1I); workplace-based provisions secondary to production (4I)
Pathways to higher levels of education and promotion				✓		Focus on ELT, rather than up-skilling (3I)
Enhanced sponsorship of ELT by enterprises			✓			Current funding inhibiting small business participation (1E)

In the following sections, the identification of each client's needs and the way these are being realised are discussed in turn. In each of these sections the format is the same. Each client groups' needs in terms of processes and outcomes is identified, followed by a synthesis of the evidence about how these expectations are being met and are not being met.

Industry

Industry needs in both sectors were identified in terms of:

- processes associated with the currency of, and flexibility in, VET provisions
- the competence of the teaching staff
- the infrastructure to provide quality delivery

Flexibility refers to access, meeting the requirements of both small and large enterprises with negotiation, input, and decision-making occurring at the local rather than at the national level. However, in response to this local decision-making and negotiation, it was suggested that ITABs still identify needs for the industry, and that flexibility at the local level be managed possibly through the use of external auditing to assist with maintenance of national standards and certification. So there remained considerable interest in the processes within vocational education operating inside an industry framework. This sentiment was also reflected in the call for reliability of assessment.

The outcomes desired by industry representatives are, at the enterprise level, for skilled workers whose attributes include being flexible, safe, self-directed and productive. VET provisions supporting these needs are to be relevant and applicable. At the industry level, the outcomes desired were accredited, current and relevant courses which are the product of industry consultation, improved participation by small businesses, and career paths and certification for industry workers.

In referring to how industry needs were being met, industry informants emphasised the way that the current provisions are being offered in ways that are meeting enterprise needs through flexibility in access. In particular, strands in the food processing provisions permit relevance in course provisions. In the clerical sector, the provisions meet the needs of school leavers and older workers returning to work.

Ways in which current VET provisions were failing to meet industry needs were stated as:

- there not being enough enterprise customisation
- the difficulty of meeting small and remote businesses' needs

Two out of a possible 16 informants questioned teachers' technical expertise. There were also concerns from the clerical sector about the emphasis on pre-vocational rather than more advanced courses, and the belief that many students were accessing these courses because of a lack of choice. Concerns included the priority given to learning in workplace-based provisions, and the high incidence of non-completion of the CFP, with enterprises only sponsoring those modules they believed essential to their purposes.

So, in all, the industry representatives proposed how individuals and enterprise needs were being met effectively. Concerns about structures of courses (an industry responsibility) and the inadequacy of work-based provisions in meeting individual as well as enterprise needs were also advanced and supported. Again, more customisation was called for, and solutions to provisions for enterprises which are small and/or remote.

Enterprises

Enterprise concerns about processes were related solely to provision of courses. Access to flexible local provisions either through TAFE, or through developing the capacity within enterprises themselves, were identified as key needs. These provisions aim to focus tightly on enterprise needs, presented by competent, positive and supportive teachers, able to meet individuals' needs as well as interesting and motivating staff. It is also claimed that a competitive market should be in place to secure best value and quality in these provisions. In addition, the capacity to assess employees' progress and evaluate the utility of the programs is also required.

The outcomes required for the enterprises are job-ready skills that have technical, attitudinal, personal and organisational dimensions. These outcomes need to be linked intimately to the specific tasks as well as the overall goals of the enterprises in terms of improved measurable business outcomes. The courses should be accredited and be the result of consultation with industry. As such, currency and relevance to the enterprise coalesce with industry standards.

Enterprise representatives acknowledged the role of TAFE in entry-level training, and the way that enterprise needs had been accommodated within customised curricula. The flexibility of TAFE was acknowledged, as was the value of collaboration between enterprises and TAFE. In addition, respondents proposed the value of both on- and off-the-job experiences. The excellence of the TAFE provision and the ability of TAFE teachers to set up training systems in workplaces were stated by two enterprises.

Overall, the adequacy of the dual responsibilities and provisions, and the certification that was forthcoming, were proposed as meeting enterprise needs and also those of the individuals who undertook the courses.

Conversely, informants held that enterprise customisation had not yet gone far enough and was of mixed success.

Equally, concerns about the degree of integration between on- and off-the-job provisions were proposed. As with industry respondents, there were concerns about provisions focused upon the workplace. Here, however, concerns were about adequacy of distance modes of learning, teachers' knowledge and inconsistency across TAFEs. However, one enterprise doubted whether employees' needs were best addressed by short enterprise-focused courses.

In addition, there were concerns about the widening field of providers, opportunities for genuine learning and whether the best methods for learning

were being adopted. So the focus of many of the concerns was upon inadequacies in the provision of VET tailored to the needs of enterprises and its employees. The most common perceived shortcoming was the degree of customisation or tailoring that enterprises believed should occur. Interestingly, some of the shortcomings reported from enterprises seemed to be fuelled by concerns about a publicly funded provider, others were those who seemed predisposed to be dismissive of TAFE or have conflicting concerns. In situations where the impression was of a genuine effort at working together, there was strong support and respect for the TAFE provisions. The point was that the level of criticism of TAFE provisions was not always supportable by the evidence being proffered.

Overall, some enterprises were satisfied with the provisions, while others were not. It seems that the dissatisfaction was over degree, rather than the ability and willingness of current VET provisions to meet enterprise needs. Interestingly, each of the enterprises demanding more customisation had at one point praised the flexibility, existing customisation and adequacy of the current provisions. This usually referred to provisions by TAFE, albeit through facilitated processes of support and distance provisions.

Regions

The process needs of the community consistently focus on consultations and interactions among all client groups, and between these groups and providers. Specifically, it was held that the provisions would need to identify, understand and meet individuals' needs, which included motivating the individuals undertaking these courses. The competence of teaching staff was held to be important. In addition, the need for maintenance of national curriculum to assist with certification and portability was acknowledged.

The desired outcomes comprised means for higher levels of sponsorship of training by small business and enhanced participation in apprenticeship-type arrangements by local enterprises. Associated with this were demands that the courses be relevant and applicable, meeting the development of learners, not only in gaining employment but also in the pursuit of careers.

Balancing concerns between individuals and enterprises, the community respondents also emphasised the need for VET provisions to add value to the enterprise and improve business outcomes in measurable ways. Hence, courses are required to be accredited—the result of consultation with business—and also be current, relevant and applicable to local enterprises.

The informants for the region expressed satisfaction with the educational provisions and the flexible approach adopted by TAFE in meeting local needs. This included particular needs, such as those of migrants. The view from these informants was that the needs of the enterprises and individuals of the region were being well catered for.

Concerns raised by these community informants were associated with resourcing to make VET provisions accessible to remote students, those with special needs, and the possible diversion of resources into large companies or overseas ventures. An informant with an interest in an alternative provision proposed that TAFE was not aware of enterprise needs.

However, overall, more concerns were directed at enterprises and their lack of participation in VET. One initiative which emerged from the investigation is loose alliances among small businesses which can be—and in some cases are being—used to organise provisions of VET in ways that each enterprise would not be able to do independently. This approach has been proposed as a likely means for training within small business (Buttery & Buttery 1994; Kearns 1997). Interestingly, this model is forged by mutuality of interests, and represents something that could be nurtured at the regional level.

So, many of the concerns of the regions did not question the adequacy of the existing VET provision. Instead, they were concerned about resourcing, the willingness of enterprises to participate, and the impact of competition policy on the region, as much as about criticisms of the adequacy of TAFE or its teachers.

Individuals

Individuals wanted quality, flexible VET provisions, supported by appropriate infrastructure. These provisions are to comprise well-prepared content, presented by competent, positive and supportive teachers, able to realise individuals' needs. Data from the students' surveys, presented in table 3.22, indicate that 'practical skills for the job' and 'good teachers' were also qualities most desired by the students.

Outcomes were mainly employment-related. However, more than just gaining employment, they focused on progression, careers and self-employment. Consequently, the course outcomes need to be relevant and applicable.

So, more than just employment, these outcomes are about progression within and across enterprises and self-employment. Pathways to higher positions and the attainments of personal goals reinforce this focus. To support this focus, the following describes the backgrounds and goals from participants in one of the focus groups. These are five prospective clerical course students who were asked what they wanted from the course:

- Wants a good job, not in a factory, and pays well so he can buy a house.
- Partner wants to retire from train driving in five years, to drive trucks. She wants to be the bookkeeper for this business.
- Has been in catering for the last 10 years, but was made redundant last year. She enjoyed some short computer courses and decided to work her way up the ladder.
- Daughter is now in high school and will need to know how to use a computer. It is important that she can show her, because daughter has a learning disability.

- Completed a course last year—Certificate in General Education for adults—and decided she wants to do another course. She is new to the region and hopes to meet people and get some work in office administration, even as a volunteer. She has not been in the workforce for 20 years, and wants to bring herself up to current standards and get over her fear of computers.

As illustrated here, these prospective students bring with them goals that are career-related, strategic, and responding to personal and family needs.

Student informants in the focus groups provided data about the quality of provisions (access, flexibility, attendance patterns, options, integration of experiences) and outcomes (transferable skills, confidence and skills, certification).

The survey data reported students valuing:

- access to workplace practice organised through TAFE
- certification
- transferability of knowledge learnt within the college provision

The self-paced approach was seen to meet the needs of current and prospective students in the survey. The most common response from the on-campus respondents was the convenience of the mode of study. This referred to the flexibility in time-tabling to meet the needs of the students (e.g. family and work commitments). Students in the focus groups emphasised the flexibility and effort that teachers expended in order to meet their needs. They reported teachers making themselves and facilities available prior to the morning starts, so that students could gain additional practice on basic skills. Links between on- and off-the-job components featured strongly in the students' perceptions of the current provisions.

Dissatisfaction with provisions can be delineated into those pertaining to workplace-based provisions and those for campus provisions.

Concerns about the former include:

- the level of initial work
- the need to pre-test to give credit for existing learning
- the difficulties with distance provisions
- the preparedness and completeness of materials
- reliance upon others
- the amount of time required
- problems imposed by shift work

Concerns from campus-based students were associated commonly with:

- the need for longer periods of preparation and reinforcement of basic skills
- the relevance of some material
- accessing teacher time

Of these, the concern by current students about relevance is most noteworthy. Significantly, when asked how the arrangements had failed to secure their needs, the students responded quite uniformly and with the highest frequencies, that the provisions had not failed to meet their needs.

Summary

The industry responses were indicative of their concerns about securing a balance between enterprise needs and the requirements of the industry as a whole, which includes the individuals who work within it. The rigidities they suggest are focused upon maintaining a national presence, and these may well be criticised by others for attempting to maintain an industry role. However, more importantly, it seems these measures emphasise the need for structures within an environment that is rapidly becoming deregulated and market driven. There is often commonality between the concerns of communities and those of industry representatives on these matters.

The concern to maintain, in the longer term, activities more broadly focused than those found within enterprises, are represented here. Yet, at the same time, there is acknowledgement of the central role that enterprises play in the economic health of the community, and that 'industry' would not exist without enterprises. However, there is also a common view that enterprises are required to accept responsibilities, as well as enjoying the benefits of the emerging focus within VET. Concerns about the quantum and quality of participation by enterprises in VET are common. The number of opportunities furnished by enterprises is held to be disappointing, as are the numbers of individuals who are able to graduate from programs in which individual enterprises are sponsoring and selecting the material to be undertaken.

The needs of enterprises and individuals are being met, albeit in different ways. Enterprise needs were met through the tailoring of provisions and being responsive. Although there is some dissent from this view, it is a matter of degree, with all enterprises expressing support for the provisions they have been able to access. Students, in a number of ways, have expressed overall satisfaction with their provisions.

Many of the concerns of industry are about the erosion of national prescription, and the lack of quality control through a market-based approach. The view from industry is that the purchasers (enterprises) may not be informed, and are drawn to make decisions on a cost-only basis. With the erosion of 'front-end' regulatory arrangements, which providers had to submit themselves to, there is concern that this deregulation will lead to a dilution of standards of instruction and assessment. In addition, there is a concern about the erosion of national training provisions, which have been the product of exhaustive consultation. Providing VET for small businesses remains a problem, even more so when they are remote. Moreover, these are least well placed to implement their own needs, and are in a poor negotiating position with providers. So there is a dichotomy between small and large enterprises in terms of training provisions that rely on market-based provisions. As noted above, there is evidence of loose alliances

forming between small businesses that are, or could be, used to manage their provisions of VET.

The community appears to be divided into:

- those who believe the market-based approach is the one most likely to secure regional goals
- those who have concerns that interests will not be catered for by the market

The former were closely aligned to the needs of enterprises, seeing regional development closely aligned to that of its enterprises (usually large enterprises). The second group was concerned about broader sets of interests.

One concern was that local TAFE institutes may be focused more upon marketing their programs and services elsewhere than meeting local goals, and being concerned with larger enterprises at the cost of smaller enterprises. This is probably more the case in the food processing sector that has more direct links between enterprises and providers, than in the clerical sector. However, if the practice in the former sector is illustrative of likely changes in the future, it is important to consider how best needs that are not catered for by market prescriptions can be met. As has been shown earlier, many of the changes to an enterprise-based approach are premised upon moves to impose market principles and practices into vocational education. Constraints brought about by a vocational education system that is seeking to manage shifts in its funding base and rely more heavily upon the contributions of enterprises, and also individuals, are allied to this move.

As has been foreshadowed above, there is an orthodoxy that is developing to accommodate these changes. However, unless the strategic needs of each industry, the developmental needs of regions, and individuals' aspirations are addressed—as well as those of enterprises—it is unlikely that the VET system will fulfil its role within the community.

In conclusion, commonality of responses across all groups was associated with the provision of courses. Flexibility, relevance and currency were commonly supported, as was their ability to meet individual needs. The competence of teachers and the need for accredited courses were the only other areas where commonality across all four groups was evident at a first look at the data. There were areas of commonality:

- between industry and students, about the need for appropriate infrastructure
- among enterprises, community and students, about the importance of meeting individuals' needs
- between industry and communities, about wider enterprise participation in VET and, in particular, wider participation by small business
- between enterprises and community, about improving business outcomes
- between community and students, about realising individuals' employment and career goals

Some of these commonalties are easily understood. Regions, enterprises and individuals all want VET provisions which meet individuals' needs from perspectives of the community, employer and individual need. Equally, regions and enterprises have common concerns with the local enterprises prospering, providing employment, and stimulating economic activity and enhanced profitability outcomes for the latter. Industry and regions also have common concerns about a wider participation by enterprises (particularly small enterprises) in VET. For the former, it is about increasing the quantum of training; for the latter it is about opportunities for individuals in the region to engage in entry-level training.

However, there are differences between the client groups on some of these needs. Take, for example, outcomes.

Enterprises want outcomes tightly aligned to their activities and goals. They want the two levels of customisation highlighted earlier: skilfulness defined in terms of their needs, and the vocational activities integrated with the particular mix of requirements of the enterprises' activities. Hence, a clerical worker in a retail setting has to understand and be competent within a particular set of clerical procedures. Also, the clerical worker is required to engage in mainstream retail activities as part of their work activities. The clerical assistant who has also to conduct sales tasks when the salesperson is away from the workplace, provides another example of the two levels of customisation of both skills and work practice that enterprises require.

In contrast, students want outcomes that are associated with employment—but not so specific that this inhibits their movement to other workplaces. They also want outcomes associated with career advancement and access to higher levels of education.

Industry has other goals that sit between enterprises and individuals, but seem more consonant with the latter.

So, whereas the enterprises are concerned about employability in their workplaces, students want outcomes which transcend this specific goal and see them positioned for careers rather than a specific job, and industry wants adherence to hard-negotiated national industry frameworks. Quite different assumptions underpin these goals. Given the importance of goals in establishing curriculum, it would seem that some reconciliation is required to meet all clients' needs.

The implications for these findings are discussed in the next chapter.

4 Towards a reconciliation of VET needs and interests

Overview

In keeping with government reforms elsewhere, vocational education policy initiatives in recent times have sought to concentrate upon 'demand' side factors. That is, much of the concern has been to develop a vocational education system in the country which is responsive to the needs of its clients. To understand what comprises this demand side role, four client groups were identified (industry, enterprises, regions and individuals) in an earlier study (Billett et al. 1997). This investigation examined the needs of these client groups, how those needs are currently being met by the vocational education system and what has to happen for these needs to be reconciled and most readily met.

A key motivation in undertaking this inquiry was to understand the consequences of the changing relationships between the four client groups, with the shift in emphasis from industry to enterprises.

Previously, the domination of industry eclipsed the interests of the other client groups. The question is whether a shift to an emphasis upon enterprises can also meet the needs of the other client groups. If demand-side interests are to be the genuine focus of vocational education policy, then the interests of all four client groups should be identified and met—not just those of one or two groups. As proposed in the earlier work (Billett et al. 1997), each of the four client groups have legitimate needs, which together comprise the demand for VET. Moreover, mutuality of interests and reconciliation of conflicting interests among client groups seem to be the hallmark of mature vocational education systems (OECD 1994a, 1994b). Certainly, given the reduction in their commitment to vocational education, a system which emphasises enterprise needs over the others should be considered carefully.

The data presented in the previous chapter provide evidence of a change in emphasis towards an enterprise-based vocational education provision. Moreover, there are consequences from this change that may not be in all client groups' interests. Although these findings are drawn from only two sectors of industry, they foreshadow concerns which may become more apparent in a broader shift towards an emphasis on enterprises.

The data in the previous chapter detail the different needs of the four client groups, and highlights areas of commonality and of distinctiveness. So, this chapter draws upon the analysis of the data presented in chapter 3. The key aim of this analysis includes determining whether there is an emerging emphasis on

enterprises, and what this means for the goals for, and provisions of, vocational education. In addition, the study aims to identify areas of commonality and difference in clients' needs, and to consider how differences might be reconciled.

This chapter commences with an overview of the client groups' needs in the face of a shift to an enterprise focus in VET provisions. Next, the implications for planning and advice are discussed. Following this, a view of curriculum development is advanced which seeks to reconcile the clients' needs. Having outlined these two premises for progress, the role of State and national training authorities in responding to these premises is examined. Following this, a discussion about the factors that will cause enterprises to enhance their investment in VET is presented. Finally, the emerging role for vocational educators in meeting the complex demands of the four client groups is proposed.

Changes in the relationships between client groups

Context and significance

There are good reasons to consider a change in the relationships among VET client groups. During the previous era of an 'industry-led' provision of vocational education, the reconciliation of clients' interests and concerns was deemed to be through peak representative groups of employers and employees, and through governments. The concerns of corporate employer and union interests focused on issues associated with national uniformity, and securing micro-economic reform, as a means of providing benefits to their constituents. Linkages between educational and industrial arrangements were used to determine levels of remuneration and career advancement in some industries. However, vocational education goals were subordinated to industrial concerns in these arrangements.

Yet it seems that this approach to securing policy goals, through tri-partite, corporatist 'industry-based' decision-making, has failed to meet the needs or capture the interests of three other clients (enterprises, regions and individuals) (Billett et al. 1997). This failure is evident in the decline of enterprise commitment to both the quantum and quality of entry-level training. With the transfer from national industrial awards (which mandated training) to enterprise agreements, much of the enterprise commitment to VET has dissipated (Callus 1994; Guthrie & Barnett 1996; Misko 1996; Smith 1995). Relatively few enterprise agreements contain references to structured training (Guthrie & Barnett 1996).

Moreover, there has been a marked decline in the numbers of apprentices being employed, and a pattern of sponsorship is emerging that favours one-year traineeship arrangements over the three/four year commitment required for apprenticeships (STB 1995, 1997). Concomitantly, the recent actions transfer the focus of VET away from industry needs to those of enterprises (e.g. training packages). The potential shift to an emphasis on enterprises raises concerns that, again, the needs and interests of the other three clients groups may be subordinated. Hence, some reconciliation of differences is necessary.

However, responding to the needs of the four groups that comprise the demand side of vocational education is likely to be complex, and more confounding than responding to just one. For example, take the central concern about vocational education serving economic goals. In shifting the emphasis from industry to enterprise, the focus is changed from those of a general kind, to those associated with assisting enterprise performance, productivity and profitability. And, in fulfiling the economic goals of enterprises, it is not certain that those of individuals (career enhancement), or regions (development, rejuvenation), will be achievable.

Evidence, and consequences, of a shift to an emphasis upon enterprises

There is evidence of a change to a focus upon enterprises in VET provisions. From an analysis of the data in the previous chapter, the emerging focus on enterprise needs is evident in the requirements for vocational educational provisions, roles of teachers, the planning for courses, and educational experiences. That is, in the two industries selected for this investigation, the goals for the content and means of providing courses are now being focused upon, or are expected to be focused upon, the needs of enterprises. Although the evidence of a focus on enterprises was stronger in food processing enterprises, it was not restricted to them. Hence, although the discussion below reflects the two industries selected for the investigation, it is necessary to consider the consequences of a wider shift to enterprise-based arrangements.

The demands for a strong enterprise accent were articulated most strongly by large enterprises. However, support was also found elsewhere. Community representatives commonly proposed that vocational education provisions should directly support local enterprise—in order to develop or maintain a vibrant local economy which can offer employment and careers to individuals. Many individuals, particularly employees, also valued programs tailored to their enterprise needs. Equally, most industry representatives acknowledged the importance of provisions tailored to these needs. In the food processing sector, the stranded course structure facilitates this kind of tailoring at the industry or occupational level.

However, the endorsement of an enterprise focus was not without qualification. Industry, regional and some enterprise respondents questioned how small and/or remote enterprises will fare under an enterprise-focused system—particularly one underpinned by market principles. It was stated that, whereas large enterprises may well be able to use the market to best secure their needs, this is unlikely to be an option for small business. Some industry representatives questioned whether the goal of national skilfulness can be sustained under a model that emphasises the idiosyncratic needs of enterprises over common standards and certification. This issue has been raised in the United Kingdom where a deregulated approach to VET has raised similar concerns (Rees 1997; Forrester, Payne & Ward 1995; Unwin 1996).

Both industry and regional representatives questioned whether their respective strategic interests will be best served through a reliance on enterprise commitment to vocational education, when key indicators show this commitment to be faltering. That is, given the evidence of a decline in a commitment to VET by enterprises provided above, it is by no means certain that being reactive to their needs will secure an increased commitment. There is little in recent research, or in the data here, to indicate that a change to an enterprise focus alone will itself see an enhancement to enterprise commitment to training. Rather, support and facilitation are initiatives that can be associated with enhanced sponsorship of entry-level training (Billett et al. 1997). These types of interventions are currently out of favour in a market-based system of VET.

Embodiments of these concerns are evident in the data. Both industry and individual respondents expressed concern about the low level of award completion in courses sponsored by enterprises (e.g. CFP). Industry certification is not being achieved by individuals at levels that reflect their participation in these courses.

Moreover, most individuals, as well as industry and community respondents, propose that course outcomes should not be so enterprise-specific that they inhibit individuals' mobility. Significantly, this concern was not restricted to students seeking employment. Even respondents who are employees frequently proposed that the workplace-based course should not be so limited as to inhibit their career aspirations, which may reside outside of the enterprise. Although some enterprises fund the courses, employees are often asked to give their own time to participate in the course. Employees' commitment of their own time was used by these individuals to legitimate their interests as extending reasonably beyond those of enterprises.

Individuals who are not employees participating in VET courses commonly held employment to be a key goal. However, this intent was usually qualified by a concern for that employment to assist in meeting their career or personal aspirations. In particular, highly enterprise-specific course outcomes have been rejected by individuals—both from within and outside enterprises.

It was commonly supported that the view of lifelong learning is shifting to a focus of maintaining the currency of skills throughout life. The consistent enterprise response to maintaining this currency is in the form of provisions of opportunities for employees. However, as reported here and elsewhere (Forrester et al. 1995), there is likely to be disparity amongst the kinds of opportunities afforded by different enterprises. In chapter 3, reference is made to a subject who wanted to seek other employment, because the paucity of the technology in her workplace meant that her newly-won skills with computers was being eroded from a lack of opportunity to practice. Therefore, the quality of experiences in workplaces, as well as access to opportunities to develop further vocational knowledge, are likely to be differentiated across enterprises. In a system more focused upon enterprise-based provisions, this problem may be more difficult to resolve. Hence, depending upon the provisions in enterprises, individuals' ability to learn throughout their lives will be quite different.

It is unlikely that an enterprise-focused system would ever be comprehensive enough to provide a systematic offering of VET provisions. It seems that there will need to be college-based provisions which might also augment and support that which happens in enterprises. The policy direction seems to be more about a shift to meet workplace needs, rather than a wholesale departure from the role played by TAFE institutes (Moran 1997).

However, chasing enterprise commitment rather than funding these provisions from the public purse could lead to a loss of coherent goals for and processes adopted within vocational education. There is a tension between governments' desire for control and for deregulation. Deregulation eases government control. In particular, the divide between provisions for those who are employed in large enterprises and those who are not, is likely to become distinct.

The emergence of an emphasis upon enterprise-focused learning has been supported by recent interest in learning in workplaces. This interest is often associated with attempts to reduce the cost of vocational education provisions, and making possible access to provisions that are not available through educational institutions. Other reasons include views about the efficacy and quality of learning in workplace settings (Billett 1992). For instance, the construction of individuals' knowledge may well be enhanced by immersion in the authentic experiences, such as those provided in the workplace. The situated cognition view holds that there are many contributions provided by learning in workplaces, which would be difficult to replicate in non-workplace settings (Billett 1994, 1996; Billett et al. 1998). A justification for learning in workplaces is that it avoids the transfer problem from the classroom to the workplace. While this may be true, unless learning in workplaces is well structured and utilises learning strategies able to overcome the inherent problems of learning in that context, then that learning may be quite specific to that context (Billett et al. 1998). That is, the knowledge acquired by the learners may have limited capacity to be used within the particular enterprise, should the context change (e.g. different products/services, work tasks) or the workplace.

In sum, the needs and aspirations of industry, individuals and regions cannot be wholly realised by an approach to VET that permits enterprise interests to dominate the decision-making within VET. Yet, it is readily acknowledged that involvement and participation of both small and large enterprises is essential for a robust vocational education system that is able to respond effectively to the needs of the other client groups.

The integrated model of initial vocational preparation (e.g. apprenticeship) is held to be the most potent means of developing vocational knowledge (OECD 1994a). This is because it extends the learning that best offers the prospect for transferable knowledge. There are real pedagogical concerns with initial vocational preparation being conducted wholly within educational institutes. Unfortunately, this issue is exacerbated at the moment by high numbers enrolling in associate diploma level courses that are, for the most part, wholly off-the-job provisions. Therefore, the task ahead is to seek both accommodation of the different needs and interests, and reconciliation among those interests.

Industry versus occupation: Accent on organising vocational education

There is a case for a change in the overall basis for organising the national coherence of vocational education provisions. It is suggested here that the change is from a focus upon industry, to a focus upon occupations. As stated repeatedly in this report, the last decade has been characterised by Australia's industry-led vocational education system. This approach, which included detailed prescriptions, demanded high levels of regulation.

However, inadequacies in the use of an industry basis for organising and managing the provision of vocational education have been long recognised. Early evidence included difficulty in securing national industry standards in the metals industry. Such standards were perceived to require the subjugation of one or another of the occupational interests (e.g. metals, electrical) which had been categorised as part of the industry. This perception was firmly resisted. A similar circumstance occurred in the construction sector. In addition, tensions brought about by industry categorisations were evident when vocational activities transgressed the boundaries of industry sectors (e.g. fork lift driving, front office/receptionist tasks).

The inadequacy of industry-based arrangements emerged in this investigation. Both industry sectors have quite different structures and purposes, and ways they organise occupational tasks. These differences, and their consequences for VET provisions, have resulted in quite distinct provisions of VET, as proposed in table 4.1. Even the basis of an industry premise does not hold up.

Table 4.1: Comparison of the two industry sectors—food processing and clerical

Food processing (peripheral to mainstream)	**Clerical (embedded within VET system)**
Stranded curriculum arrangements based around sub-sectors of industry	Generic curriculum for applications across industry
Access largely through employment Participants typically employees Workplace-based provisions (experiences)	Access through college provisions Participants typically 'students at college' College-based provisions (experiences)
Characterised by non-completion of certification	Evidence of high levels of certification not commensurate with workplace experience
Concerns about distance provisions, time required to complete modules, etc.	Concerns about employment/career, convenience of college-based provisions.

The clerical sector is really an occupation which transcends industry boundaries. Unlike food processing, it is difficult to find enterprises that are solely clerical in their function. Instead, it provides a service to other industries. There are clerical skills that are common to most workplaces, albeit configured in different ways according to the needs of the enterprise. This means that the needs of enterprises have two levels of contextualisation required to take place with clerical work. Firstly, there are different applications of clerical skills in different workplaces (e.g. greater or lesser emphasis on word processing, filing, customer interactions, etc.) and the requirement to master enterprise-specific administrative systems

(e.g. payroll, client service, patient records, financial and administrative systems). Secondly, many enterprises have clerical tasks integrated with other tasks, and clerical workers are expected to be multi-skilled. This means quite different things in workplaces that are as different as a small wholesaling business of two people, to a major regional hospital, to a retail store. As discussed above, these two levels of contextualisation have implications for curriculum practice.

The food processing industry is quite different in structure and organisation. Yet it, too, falls into categories of vocational practice that defy commonality. In the food processing industry about 15 distinct strands have been identified, reflecting the needs of particular sectors. The stranding itself indicates a lack of coherence which could lead to it being seen as representing an industry. It seems unlikely that a meat processor would be able to pursue a career in viticulture, or vice versa. More likely, each would have quite different pathways within the occupational strand. Unlike the clerical industry, the skills are less likely to be readily transferable—say, between a meat process worker and one engaged in viticulture or vegetable production and processing. So, although there are attributes that are valued across the sector, these are likely to be quite general rather than highly specific. For example, the knowledge and skills associated with safe food handling in the food processing industry are very different in strands that are as distinct as meat processing, viticulture and seafood.

Hence, even so-called generic skills are likely to be quite different across the strands, as are tasks undertaken across enterprises (e.g. types of bread baked, meat processed, small goods produced, techniques used). A common approach to instruction needs to be adopted to help develop understanding about occupational activities such as food handling. Workers in this sector who have these understandings, faced with a new food handling task in that workplace or another, should have the capacity to offer responses to that problem.

However, the overall structure of the food processing curriculum model seems workable, as it takes account of the requirements of sub-sectors or occupations. It also goes some way to addressing the first level of contextualisation which was requested by enterprises in the clerical sector. As such, the stranded approach can be considered as a model for other sectors that have this type of inter-sectoral delineation. One reason is that it is synonymous with identifiable occupational activities.

Conversely, this approach may not be wholly suited to the needs of the clerical sector, given that sector's service role and the potential diversity of industry strands. For the food processing industry, the arrangements were reported as working well—inhibited mainly by the non-completion of certificates by employees, who make up the majority of those enrolled in the courses.

In order to overcome the discrepancies in the industry-based provision, it is timely to consider using occupations—rather than industry—as an organising concept for the ordering of vocational activities, and as a focus for vocational education provisions.

It was decided earlier (NTB 1992) to use industry classifications as a means to delineate vocational education, largely because of associations with national industry awards to deliver micro-economic reforms of which vocational education became a part. However, it is now timely to consider the utility of occupations as a basis for organising vocational education.

There seem to be four reasons for considering this option.

1 *Separation from industrial relations*
Separating curriculum practices from now defunct industrial classifications removes these provisions from decision-makers whose interests are usually vested elsewhere (industrial relations), and probably never served the interests of vocational education. This is not to suggest a divorce from industrial considerations, but removing the subordination of vocational education to these considerations. Rather, those matters which are best met through industrial means, and those best addressed through professional means, can be identified.
2 *National, but negotiable framework*
This provides coherence for VET provisions through occupations which reflect skilfulness (vocational knowledge), individuals' aspirations (career pathways within a vocation), and enterprises (access to relevant occupations).
3 *Engendering collaboration and mutuality*
This means enhancing opportunities for collaborative and voluntary arrangements, and for associations that emphasise the importance of vocational activities (professional practice), rather than adherence to an industrial prescription mandated by legislation and regulation—which has failed to secure a commitment to VET.
4 *Enhancing flexibility of application*
This provides enhanced flexibility for the recognition of the same vocation within enterprises that wholly, or almost wholly, comprise that occupation, or those where many occupations are required each with their own specialisations.

So, the change suggested here is to shift vocational education from an industrial towards a professional environment. There is little evidence to suggest that wholly embedding vocational education within the industrial relations environment has done much to advance the cause of vocational education. Although, in earlier times, the coercive measures of obligatory award provisions may have stimulated (and coerced) some initial commitment to vocational education, recent experience indicates that this has dissipated. While industrial relations have a legitimate interest in training, it is not its central concern. Indeed, the combative industrial environment may have hardened attitudes against vocational education, as the evidence emerging from recent deliberations within enterprises suggests. However, as stated above, this is not about divorcing industrial concerns from vocational education, but rather attempting to balance the professional and industrial dimensions.

There is a clear need to have a coherent national framework to furnish the needs of those who wish to access qualifications and have vocational identity. In

addition, it provides a coherent basis under which courses can be developed, assessment managed and vocationally appropriate content taught. In addition, there is a need to guard against 'adhockery', which might emerge from an enterprise-based system (Forrester et al. 1995). However, it is important that such a framework is not prescriptive. It is impracticable to account for the various circumstances in which the occupational knowledge is to be applied, as well as the diverse characteristics of the students undertaking the program. Put simply, it is impossible to be able to account for all the diverse circumstances and needs created by occupational requirements.

Moreover, a highly specific national curriculum provision requires massive effort in regulation and monitoring. More importantly, it is not viable to believe that there will be voluntary adherence to detailed national prescriptions. By aiming for general statements of intent and recommended content, a set of statements about the occupation are advanced which are:

- defensible
- negotiable at the local level
- specific enough to be used as the basis for certification, development of curriculum and assessment procedures

These types of measures are not so different than those guiding the major professions.

The focus upon occupations will have some of the shortcomings of the existing industry categorisation. That is, there will be overlap, and in some cases workers being asked to conduct tasks which comprise multiple activities—although some of these may readily form occupations of their own (e.g. secondary process workers).

However, it seems that a focus on occupations may more readily assist individuals' identity within a vocation with the 'pride of trade' enjoyed in the trades and professions. In other countries, this characteristic has been seen to be important in affecting the quality of vocational tasks and forging mature relationships among the community, individuals and enterprises (OECD 1994a). In this country, such an approach may help establish vocational practice as something more valued—something which can be used to bridge the gap between enterprises and providers. Also, it can be used as something with which individuals can identify, and take pride in. However, adopting such an approach is likely to be burdened by the reluctance and lack of interest that has been manifested by the previous mandated arrangements. It is in the interests of all parties that the needs of all client groups are met, in ways that engage participation in and the sponsorship of VET.

So, it seems timely to consider using occupations as a classification for responding to the needs of industry and individuals, as well as those of enterprises and, by default, those of regions.

From this, and the analysis of the data presented in the previous chapter, it is proposed that the occupational role in reconciling VET clients' needs can be through the following types of contributions:

- an occupational basis for organising vocational education curricula
- the stranding negotiated at a national level
- the negotiation of non-specific educational intent (goals and aims)
- organising national processes to manage reliability in certification and assessment
- the negotiation of occupationally appropriate content as a basis for choice
- the facilitation and support for enterprises to participate in VET and/or organise it for their own workplace at the regional level

Therefore, rather than vocational education being led by 'industry' (being the governmental co-opted spokespersons for enterprise needs), it is proposed that a shift to a client group who speaks on behalf of the vocation—in which individuals engage, and seek to realise their aspirations and the skilfulness required by enterprises—is occurring.

Essentially, this proposal suggests shifting from a highly regulated system at a national level, to one which furnishes intents, goals and statements of content for the vocation, but permits the relevance and specific needs of the system to exist at the local level where curriculum is to be implemented.

So the engagement of enterprises is captured through provisions that exist within frameworks established for the occupation. The client group representing the occupation, as well as having these responsibilities, may also seek to use means such as external examination and accreditation for individuals—as in the professions. Such a client group would share an industry concern about the breadth and level of skilfulness in the vocation. It could also offer itself as being more concerned with promoting the occupation and its pathway, and organise both the content and intents for courses that furnish the prospect for transfer across enterprises and even industry sectors.

Indeed, as foreshadowed, if the removal of 'front-end' regulatory mechanisms continue to erode, such a body might be vested with the responsibility of external quality control in the form of appraising students' knowledge, and determining certification remote from those who are providing. It is at this level that State-based considerations for regulated entry-level training can be established, albeit to be refined in greater detail at the local level.

The sorts of arrangements being discussed here are analogous to the professional bodies that have sustained the professions in this country and others, and the guild arrangements that have performed similar arrangements in European countries. Part of the concern here is to separate the standing of the occupation from direct government influence, and attempt to encourage individuals' vocational identities.

It is possible that vocational groups will be supported more by individuals than by enterprises or government. This may mean a cost to individuals, but it is likely that an improved standing of the occupation may result, with a different kind of portability (e.g. the city and guilds which have a standing quite different than colleges' certificates).

Yet, in addition to concerns associated with occupations, other voices need to be heard and included in planning for vocational education provisions.

Enterprise needs for customisation

As stated repeatedly above, enterprises want VET programs that specifically meet their needs. Many of the enterprises hold this as a right, and a benchmark by which VET is to be valued. These enterprises want programs that can furnish vocational knowledge (food processing or clerical skills) to meet their particular needs, and want those needs to extend to the particular organisation of workplace activities within the enterprise. Hence, they want tailored skills in the vocation, and workers who are able to be multi-skilled in enterprises that vary in scope, specialty and purpose.

Enterprise needs cannot be ignored, as their participation is required for integrated programs which are most likely to develop vocational knowledge. To develop these attributes takes time, practice with both routine and non-routine activities, access to expertise or guidance, and potentially a structured approach to learning. Combinations of on- and off-the-job types of VET provisions are likely to be able to secure these forms of knowledge, where possible. The on-the-job experiences provide access to a range of knowledge and guidance in the workplace that can assist the learners' construction of that knowledge. In particular, when off-the-job experiences are unavailable, on-the-job experiences, when supported by instructional strategies suited for the workplace, have the potential to assist much of this development (Billett et al. 1997).

Alternatively, off-the-job experiences may be effective in securing understandings that are not apparent or accessible in the workplace. One confounding factor is that enterprise goals for performance are likely to be quite situational and vary from workplace to workplace. However, it seems that it is difficult to learn broadly transferable knowledge in one setting (e.g. the college classroom) and expect that this knowledge will transfer. It is more likely that knowledge secured richly in one context needs to be abstracted from that context to another. This suggests that extensive experiences are required in one context—with assistance being provided in order for the learner to appreciate what is transferable to other circumstances, and what level of transfer can reasonably be expected. Also, instructional strategies which maximise transfer need to be considered.

Consequently, whether individuals are learning in the workplace or the classroom, provisions need to account for the forms of knowledge required for expertise. An issue here is the forms of knowledge required and identified by the enterprises. As stated above, these will not be met by curriculum provisions that focus on content alone, nor behavioural outcome-focused measures of performance. This suggests that, rather than curriculum arrangements that are focused and pre-specified at the 'industry' (vocational) level, these two levels of curriculum provision need to be considered. This recognises the unique nature of enterprise requirements.

What is learnt needs to be contextualised in terms of the needs of the enterprise—such as, 'The way we do correspondence here is...', 'The way we bake bread here is...', etc. This approach is justifiable, on curriculum and pedagogical grounds, in providing a contextual basis to developing knowledge which is richly associated, and is likely to transfer from the situation of learning to the target site (presuming they are different).

This justification is premised on access to instructional strategies that not only embed the knowledge experienced in the workplace, but also dis-embed knowledge from that particular context in order for it to be transferable. Curriculum could be tailored to meet both the needs of the enterprises outlined above—particularly in process terms. That is—more than content being relevant to the workplace—what is learnt is learnt in such a way as to be transferable to other situations and circumstances that may need to be confronted by the enterprise. This tailoring has the advantage of permitting a 'near transfer' for what is learnt, as the learning focuses upon activities associated with their work activities in the particular enterprise.

Moreover, as mentioned above, transfer to other circumstances and situations is attempted through approaches to learning that aim for 'far' transfer. However, there will always be components of knowledge that are unlikely to transfer, or for which transfer is 'too far' (e.g. tasks that are novel, unanticipated, etc.).

Enterprises' most commonly demanded requirement of providers was that they be flexible in responding to enterprises' requirements. Yet, enterprises do not want flexibility, they want courses tailored to their requirements. Flexibility is reserved for the actions of the providers in realising enterprise needs. Rarely was any consideration given to the needs of individuals' learning and outcomes, except in terms of how it meets the needs of the enterprise.

The question is how these arrangements can also be in the interests of industry, individuals and regions. As noted above, if learning processes are given appropriate emphasis in the implementation of the curriculum arrangements, the development of robust (transferable) outcomes could follow: that is, what individuals want of these arrangements. Equally, if vocational interests can be realised through curriculum frameworks such as those advocated above, there is the prospect of securing industry (vocational) goals in terms of the levels of skilfulness. The stranding within the food processing industry comes halfway to meeting the needs for contextualisation. Yet, such arrangements are not suited to all industry (vocational) sectors.

Building upon what has been advanced above, it seems that enterprise needs can be met by the following means, in ways that also are reconcilable with the needs of individuals and industry (occupations):

- Provisions of occupationally-based strands—where appropriate—which approximate vocational activities within enterprises.
- The negotiation/refinement of both content and outcomes. If the occupational content is focused but open to negotiation, and if the occupational intents permit the objectives to be met at the enterprise

levels, then this may permit their needs to be recognised. Moreover, processes of implementation favour instructional techniques likely to develop robust vocational knowledge.

- Support and facilitation provisions for enterprises to participate in VET or to develop a capacity to provide quality 'in-house VET programs'.

These means are consistent with those advocated above and contribute to the model advanced in the section 'Reconciling client needs through a decentring of curriculum development, implementation and evaluation', below.

Regional planning and provisions

The findings in the previous chapter indicate that regions have different needs of VET. These needs are unlikely to be fully understood, except by deliberately taking account of those needs—probably from within the region itself (Schofield & Associates 1996). For example, needs of the unemployed, job starters and disadvantaged are unlikely to be uniform across regions, and are best able to be understood in the particular locality.

In table 4.2, the variables within regions across the case studies have been aggregated into a consolidated list in the left-hand column. In the right-hand column, the likely consequences for educational provisions are identified.

Table 4.2: Variables within regions, and consequences for vocational education

Variables	Consequences for VET
Type of industries (scope, specialisation)	Selection and priorities for courses, levels of certification, availability of course
Employment opportunities (types, modes, scope)	Integration/non-integration of on- and off-the-job provisions, opportunities for ELT, duration of course, experiences in workplaces, demands of local enterprises
Educational provisions (scope, access, modes, relationships)	Availability, on- or off-campus mode, access to institutions, relationships between provisions
Demographic factors (age, ethnicity, language, educational achievement, size, etc.)	Cohort qualities, readiness, need for support
Goals/needs (development, consolidation, variation diversity)	Focus of educational provisions
Regional structures/identity (visibility, opaqueness, identity)	Ability for local needs to be identified and responded to

These data suggest that the types of industry sectors for whom vocational education provisions will need to be furnished vary from region to region. This is already acknowledged in planning processes. Yet the data also suggest that there are likely to be differences in both the goals for vocational education programs and the processes by which the curriculum is enacted.

Differences in the percentage of students who are employed or are from a non-English speaking background, the differences in their location and prior experience with educational provisions, suggest that vocational education

provisions need to meet these requirements. So, rather than assuming heterogeneity in goals and educational processes, differences need to be identified and addressed in the regions where individuals engage in goal-directed activity. Data from the GDS on demographic factors, industries in which graduates were likely to be employed, and in what occupational groups, support this contention.

These tables, in providing data on the differences across the regions, and between regions and the States, emphasise variability in regional factors.

In the same way that enterprises wanted negotiation and refinement of the course, it seems that local educational institutions (e.g. TAFE, private providers) should have the same latitude in negotiating the needs of the local community. So, negotiation of content, and refinement of objectives within vocational frameworks to make it suitable for the needs of the region, should be a feature of vocational education that seeks to be responsive to the diversity of the regions' needs.

As has been noted above, there are concerns that the combination of the enterprise focus in vocational education and the market thrust of current vocational education provisions, will disadvantage small and/or remote enterprises. However, there was evidence from the non-metropolitan regions that loose alliances of enterprises had formed to meet common issues (marketing, access to information), which in some cases are being—and, in others, could be—used to secure provisions of VET. These types of alliances are a part of what was advocated above: forming associations of mutual interests.

One potentially important initiative identified in this investigation was the loose alliance between small enterprises to address training provisions. Kearns (1997) and Buttery & Buttery (1994) also hold that the development of a training culture with small business appears to have its best chance of success in a networked, local environment.

Local planning

The findings on planning indicated that regional co-ordination—in ways that managed and balanced the needs and inputs of the client groups through consultation at the local level—offers the best means of planning. This contention is supported by views from the United Kingdom that suggest local development agencies (training and enterprise councils) have the potential to plan for and respond to local needs in ways that centralised planning could not (Rees 1997).

Again, such a process is only likely to be successful when perceived to be taking into account all interests, including those most able to contribute (e.g. providers anxious to secure market share, as well as powerful economic or governmental voices).

Seemingly, a balance has to be struck between a process that meets enterprise needs in ways that avoid a raft of idiosyncratic offerings that jeopardise both individuals' and industry goals. The likelihood of achieving this type of balance will not be uniform. As the delineation between public and privately funded

provisions widens, it is likely to become more difficult to realise. It is proposed that a combination of a national occupational framework—that regulates the intent and content of courses at the general level—and the use of process approaches to instruction and assessment, may overcome these shortcomings. In proposing co-ordination as a model for regional planning, it is understood that it is neither wholly consistent, nor wholly incongruent, with a market-based stratagem currently being adopted within VET.

Moreover, there has to be an interdependence between VET programs and the local requirement for development. According to Rees:

> *Such a model needs to reflect the specificity of the region's industrial structure and pattern of productive organisation.* (Rees 1997, p.143)

He cautions against basing local needs analysis on major enterprises alone, hence the emphasis on patterns of development. Enterprises are preoccupied with internal goals which may inhibit them taking a broader perspective. Equally, it is at the local level where issues of access can best be addressed. The needs for access are not uniform, nor are the conditions that permit broad access. This need falls into that which Schofield & Associates (1996) describe as being too sensitive to be accounted for by centralised planning.

Consequently, the requirement for a regional contribution to curriculum planning and development for regions' needs include:

- local planning
- local facilitation of courses to respond to the needs of:
  - local enterprises
  - access needs of individuals
  - groups of enterprises
  - local VET providers
- tailoring of provisions to enterprise needs
- negotiation of content and refinement of outcomes

Again, these means are consistent with those advocated above and contribute to the model advanced below.

Individuals

Although the vast majority of students (prospective, current and past) reported engaging in vocational education for employment-related reasons, the reasons were usually more than just to gain employment. Often, students were able to identify clear goals for their participation in vocational education. As was illustrated in chapter 3, many of the responses indicated that careful planning and strategic considerations were foremost in their decisions about participation in vocational education.

In addition, students have particular needs in terms of accessing courses and provisions. Even those employees undertaking workplace VET courses sponsored by their employer wanted outcomes that are neither short-term nor

restricted to that enterprise. These respondents held that—because they had contributed their own time to the courses—they could legitimately hold goals beyond those of enterprises.

However, students' goals are unlikely to be uniform, and need to be considered in the planning for vocational education and provision of advice about programs. In particular, one facet that remains largely unknown is the kind of pathways that individuals take in their vocational activities throughout their lives. Commonly, these are held to change throughout life, and with increasing frequency—although it seems that the degree and frequency of change varies across vocational activities. Some occupations are wholly transformed by changes in technology (e.g. watch repairers, printing industry, clerical work), whereas in other occupations the change is more incremental (e.g. the major professions).

Overwhelmingly, the respondents to the GDS, and the respondents of the survey developed and administered for this investigation, reported very high levels of satisfaction with TAFE provisions. In particular, TAFE institutes were highly praised for those factors which they can be seen as being accountable for (e.g. quality of teaching, provision of experiences).

Many of the factors weighted *less* highly were those associated with securing employment and advancement within employment. It would be unreasonable to hold institutes of TAFE accountable for these measures. The reported key weakness in TAFE provisions were consistently those associated with information on courses and outcomes of courses.

From this and other data, individuals want accessible, flexible curriculum provisions that are relevant to enterprises, but have both goals and processes which permit their personal or vocational aspirations to be realised.

Consequently, the requirements advanced here can be seen as follows. Individuals want:

- access to courses which retain national certification
- career pathways identified
- provisions which respond to local enterprise needs
- accessible and supportive teachers who respond to individual students' needs

Again, these means are consistent with those advocated above, and contribute to the model advanced in the section below.

Reconciling client needs through a decentring of curriculum development, implementation and evaluation

The discussion above has outlined an approach to organising curriculum which seeks to reconcile the needs of the four client groups. It is premised upon a decentring of interest—which can be thought of as a shift away, rather than a separation, from the centre. That is, in the goals for courses and recommended content, the provision of certification and processes for monitoring the standing of that certification remain with the centre.

The form of the client groups representing the occupation remains influential.

There is also a need to more clearly separate the professional and industrial issues in vocational education. However, in this schema, much more of the decision-making about the provision of VET ought to occur at either the local provider or local enterprise level. These decisions include the refinement of intents (objectives) and content likely to be applicable to that situation. Hence, much more of the provision is to be formulated at the setting level.

This approach may meet both the specific and, sometimes, the short-term needs of enterprises with more strategic goals favoured by industry, regions and individuals.

Table 4.3 suggests that the key curriculum decisions are to be made at both the national and regional level. However, in contrast to the previous industry-led approach, much more legitimate and endorsed negotiation is to occur at the local level. This comprises input from local planning and enterprises being assisted by the vocational educators who will have the responsibility to implement what has been decided.

Table 4.3: Levels of engagement within VET curriculum

Vocation (industry)
Identify vocations in the field of occupational activities (paid work)
Identify and endorse aims and goals (not objectives) for vocations
Identify recommended core content
Develop curriculum arrangements which fit the vocation (stranded arrangements)
Manage national certification
Identify career pathways and develop articulation pathways
Manage external assessment
Enterprise
Negotiate with providers arrangements to suit enterprise needs
Negotiate the detail of content and course objectives
Access support and facilitation (especially small and/or remote enterprises)
Support the completion of certificates
Support instructional processes likely to secure robust learning outcomes
Regions
Local planning provisions
Local support and facilitation for enterprises and groups of enterprises
Negotiation of content and course objectives at the regional level (e.g. by TAFE institutes, private providers)
Tailoring of strands to regional needs
Determination of individuals pathways
Individuals
Access to courses which are nationally accredited
Career pathways identified
Access to provisions which address local enterprise needs and accessible and supportive teachers who address individual students' needs

Figure 4.1: Reconciling needs within vocational education

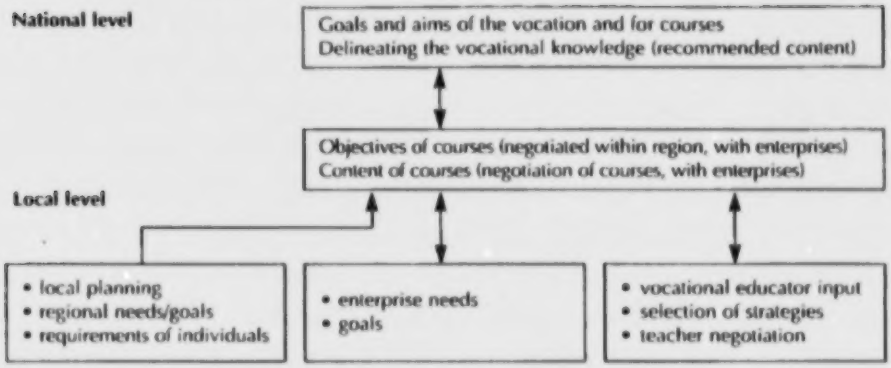

National level
Goals and aims of the vocation and for courses
Delineating the vocational knowledge (recommended content)
Objectives of courses (negotiated within region, with enterprises)
Content of courses (negotiation of courses, with enterprises)
Local level
• local planning
• regional needs/goals
• requirements of individuals
• enterprise needs
• goals
• vocational educator input
• selection of strategies
• teacher negotiation

Figure 1.1 (repeated here as figure 4.1) depicts the curriculum development process. At the national level, broad statements of intent (aims and goals) are identified, as are recommended content. Whereas the statements of intent are refined further in the form of objectives at the local level, the suitability of content is also negotiated. For example, this might include consideration of how best this content can be taught and learnt, and in what circumstances (combinations of on and off the job).

At this level, compensatory measures can be implemented to enrich experiences that will be inadequate in either the educational institution or the workplace. Equally, at this level the knowledge that is required but is difficult to learn can be identified, and appropriate strategies adopted for learners to secure this knowledge.

Balancing needs in a market-driven VET system

Market-based initiatives in vocational education may be useful for making the existing provisions more competitive. However, there is little evidence to show that they will encourage enterprises to make a greater commitment to VET—nor are they well placed to respond to long-term, strategic and equity goals.

In the non-metropolitan regions, it was evident that the market-based approach was limited in both its being established and in realising market-based goals. The 'thin' market established in the remote rural centre reflects concerns about the difficulty of establishing a training market in such locations (Anderson 1997). Essentially, it is not possible to create a market in all regions. The need for competition 'to keep providers on their toes' was advanced by some regional representatives. Equally, calls for every TAFE provision to be matched by a private one are fanciful and likely to require considerable non-market interventions:

> *It would be preferable if another provider offered dairy specific courses to keep XXXX College on their toes. Presently other competitors, such as regional TAFEs, only offer core/generic courses.*

Yet, when courses were provided by educational institutions outside the region, there were often concerns about:

- the distance provision
- teachers not understanding the context
- the amount of time available to access teachers who were geographically remote

Many enterprises praised the quality of the local provision. Others stated that the quality and responsiveness had improved in the last couple of years—which may support the view that the market can exert pressure to enhance performance.

Also, the quality of outcomes of a market-based approach are questionable. The market-based approach is most likely to benefit large enterprises, but may inhibit the provisions available to small and/or remote enterprises.

A key concern with regions was to enhance the participation by all local enterprises in the vocational education and training. However, this was not being realised under the market-based arrangements. Curiously, even large enterprises who were aware of the looming skill shortage were reluctant to increase their commitment to entry-level trade training.

Given:

- that mature adults tend not to leave these areas, and younger ones do so in search of education or employment
- the difficulty enterprises experience encouraging people to move to these regions
- the difficulty local enterprises have in gaining appropriately skilled employees

it seems surprising that enterprises are not making greater efforts to develop skilled workers.

The view of the enterprises was that something would happen—in particular that something would be done by government—to redress this problem. Hence, these enterprises were seeking a non-market solution: action by government.

Consistent with other research were concerns about the reluctance of smaller enterprises to invest in training. The data here, and that analysed elsewhere (Billett & Cooper 1997), have indicated reasons enterprises do not invest in training: too busy, unsure of relevance, too difficult, too bureaucratic. It seems that market-based provisions which make further demands upon the enterprises (choice among alternatives, negotiation with providers) are unlikely to encourage more participation by smaller enterprises. Rather, it seems that support and facilitation are most likely to secure these kinds of outcomes in the current environment.

One outcome which is potentially destructive at the local level was the reported needless competition between providers. It was held, for instance, that local consultations about VET provisions would be frustrated by the market interests of providers. In the two non-metropolitan regions, it was also held that the local expertise on VET resides with educational practitioners.

However, their willingness to provide or share that expertise was compromised by market considerations. This is not a good outcome for regions, which are in many ways required to be self-reliant, and it is one underpinned by concerns about how regional planning is to be managed. An indication of this came from informants in one region who stated that the VET-in-Schools Program was to meet needs that TAFE was failing to meet effectively. So, rather than considering this kind of provision as making a particular contribution, it was being positioned in opposition to other providers (e.g. TAFE). As one community respondent stated, competition has to work within a collaborative framework in these regions:

> *Competition between providers is needed, but they also need to be allowed to work together.* (Enterprise owner, food processing industry)

In particular, when considering the needs of the remote rural community, the market approach just did not seem to make sense:

- it seems unlikely that it can always be sustained (there is a 'thin' market)
- constant change to policies and criteria for funding actually undercuts the development of a training market
- the continuity in VET is provided by TAFE provisions
- the TAFE provision was highly valued by students, employment agencies and some enterprises

There was concern about the effects of deregulation. This was reported in both community and industry groups who fear the loss of the breadth and quality of provisions in a move to embrace the market. These concerns were analogous to those currently being reported throughout many parts of Australia, regarding the erosion of services in regional Australia.

Concerns about different standards for courses were raised in a field where a training market existed. It was held by enterprise informants that the breadth of providers engaged in the food processing sector was eroding the quality of those provisions. These concerns about standards were associated with the lack of 'front-end' regulation in the training market. The response from two food processing enterprises does not really question what industry informants proposed about the difficulty that enterprises might have in being discerning.

In sum, the market-based provisions may make for greater competition with the existing provisions of vocational education. However, there is little evidence to suggest that, alone, such arrangements will encourage enterprises to enhance the quality and quantity of the vocational education courses—particularly in the important entry-level area. Collaboration seems to be a more attractive way to meet regional needs.

Enhancing enterprise commitment to VET provisions

The findings indicate that the prospects of enterprise commitment to VET are not aligned to the kinds of strategic goals which will meet regional or industry goals, nor best respond to those of individuals. Hence, it would be unwise to

place the prospect of securing enhancements to the quantum and quality of vocational education upon enterprises.

A key concern for the viability of the vocational education system is the degree to which enterprises are willing to participate in the sponsorship of VET. This is perhaps most crucial at the entry level of vocational education provisions (e.g. apprenticeships and traineeships). Currently, there is a decline in enterprise commitment to both the quantum and quality of VET. There is overall decline in the numbers of apprentices being sponsored by enterprises, although the overall numbers of trainees are increasing.

However, the increase in traineeship levels of preparation cannot reasonably be a substitute for the decline in apprenticeship numbers. This reduction in commitment by enterprises has resulted in policies that aim to maintain the supply of apprentices through group apprenticeship schemes. In addition, initiatives which aim to more readily meet the needs of enterprises are being enacted (e.g. training packages, market-based provisions). It was advanced earlier in this report that market-based provisions are more likely to create a competitive environment within the existing provision, than to create additional demand. Certainly, the evidence from the United Kingdom is that market-based approaches are not currently redressing the shortage of skills in that country (Ernst & Young 1995; Unwin 1996).

The findings within the previous chapter reinforce these views. Although, in this investigation, a number of the enterprises were large and already expending funds on training, there was little evidence to indicate likely increases in expenditure on VET that were determined from within the enterprise. The most common reason to expend more on VET was associated with being able to secure evidence that it would enhance productivity. Many of the other responses were associated with external demand. These included external (legislative) changes. Internal demands were most commonly associated with restructuring. There was little evidence of a conscious plan to skill for the future, or to further develop the skills of workers beyond immediate needs (with one or two possible exceptions). The findings here confirm other concerns about the role of enterprises in maintaining or developing the nation's workforce. At this time, it seems that enterprise priorities are capricious and inwardly focused, and cannot be relied upon alone to furnish the skill base of Australia.

Re-professionalising vocational educators

The demand by all client groups is for vocational educators' roles to be expanded to play a wider role in determining, organising, implementing and evaluating vocational education provisions. This role denotes the need for greater discretion on the part of these educators. Generally, the work of vocational educators is roundly supported by graduates, current students, regional representatives, and those from industry and enterprises. In most situations where criticisms of vocational educators were advanced, the respondent was able to provide other accounts which were positive. So even critics, in the main, had positive accounts of the actions of vocational educators.

It has been advanced by a number of commentators that, over the past decade, vocational educators have been de-professionalised through the domination of industry over policy and practice. Typically, the teachers' role was to implement with uniformity what was determined by others. Now, it seems that the role of vocational educators is being reshaped or reformed (Seddon 1997). All four client groups proposed a broader set of roles for vocational educators in responding to their educational needs. These roles have been categorised as:

- consultant
- curriculum developer
- instructor
- advocate and supporter of learners
- policy developer

Beyond being an implementer of curriculum developed by 'industry', these roles have been extended to include being an 'adapter', 'designer' and 'researcher' (to use Marland's categories cited in Print [1987]).

However, there remains some confusion about in whose interests educators are to exercise their primary duty of concern. From the evidence presented here, it seems the professional role is being recast in ways that may be contradictory. There are clear differences between those advocating the primary focus to be upon enterprise need, and those proposing that students' needs be foremost in the teachers' concerns.

The shift to an enterprise focus is presenting a challenge to vocational educators which is quite unlike that faced by educators in other sectors. In doing so, it seems that there is a recasting of the professional role, to one more clearly founded on a base of potentially conflicting interests (between students' and employers' needs).

One way that vocational educators can reconcile the differences between enterprise and individual needs is to focus upon the processes, not just the outcomes. That is, whichever courses might claim to be associated with measurable outcomes, the focus by teachers upon the use of processes aiming to secure deeper understanding and robust procedures, may well result in outcomes that transcend the shortcomings of some of the enterprise-specific arrangements. It seems that all learning is situated in particular circumstances: the workplace or the classroom. What is important is that learning—regardless of where it happens—is supported by the use of strategies aiming to provide a basis for transfer to other situations and circumstances.

However, what is clear is that vocational educators are required to play a wider, more diverse and complex role in meeting and reconciling the needs of the four client groups. While this role will place teachers in the forefront of curriculum decision-making and leadership, it will also present novel challenges to the nature of professional practice. It would seem that, more than ever, the preparedness of vocational educators is going to be fundamental to the quality of vocational education provisions.

Summary

In summary, the ideas advanced in this chapter are as follows.

First, if vocational education is to be driven by demand-side needs, then it is important that the breadth of those needs be accommodated. Under the current arrangements, these needs can be categorised as those of industry, enterprises, regions and individuals.

Second, there seem to be good reasons to change the relationship between these client groups, as the current industry dominated arrangements appear to have failed to address the needs of the other client groups.

Third, there is evidence of a shift to an enterprise-focused approach to VET. However, this shift again raises concerns that other client needs may be subordinated. Hence, such an arrangement may not best address the needs of a demand-focused approach to VET.

Fourth, in order to reconcile the needs of the four client groups, some realignments of the organisation and planning need to occur. These realignments include the shift from an industry to an occupational focus, as a basis for national coherence within vocational education. This realignment focuses upon some separation between the educational and professional goals within vocational education from those within the industrial relations environment:

- providing a basis for skilfulness to be considered in vocational rather than industrial terms
- providing a basis for collaborative and mutual arrangements associated with the occupation
- furnishing the flexibility for the application of vocational knowledge across the industries

In addition to realignment, it is proposed that greater negotiation and customisation of vocational education provisions occur at the local level. At this level, the detail of course provisions, their intents and content need to be worked through local planning and negotiation. These procedures include determining priorities for the region, facilitating broad access, and collaboration among enterprises. In short, the approach is for curricula to be negotiated at two levels: the national and the regional. This approach is concerned with decentring, yet retaining national coherence, seeking a reconciliation of needs through concerns with course outcomes and instructional interventions aiming to maximise transfer.

Fifth, the market-based approach, while being able to secure competition between providers, and force greater responsiveness for large enterprises, is limited to those circumstances. It seems unable to meet the needs of small and/or isolated enterprises, and no evidence emerged of its ability to increase the quantum and quality of VET provisions.

Sixth (building upon the above), there is little evidence that strategic goals of increasing the quantum and quality—either at the enterprise, regional or

national level—is likely to be realised through simply addressing enterprise needs by increasing customisation and marketisation. Instead, it seems that initiatives providing support and facilitation are likely to be required.

Finally, to meet the full range of demand-side needs advanced above will require a broader and more discretionary role for vocational educators. All client groups hold this to be a desirable circumstance.

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APPENDIX
Meeting the demand

The needs of vocational education and training clients

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NCVER

Provincial centre

Introduction

This case study has been written as part of a project that seeks to understand and articulate the needs of the four key clients of vocational education and training (VET), and how these needs are reflected in existing and evolving VET policy and practice. The four client groups of VET are industry, community, enterprises and individuals (Billett et al. 1997). The project aims to understand how the needs of each client group can best be addressed at a time when the focus upon decision-making within VET is changing. The change is from an 'industry-led' system, which has dominated the last decade, to an enterprise-focused system. The concern was to consider how best to reconcile the needs and aspirations of all four clients groups in the provisions and curriculum within VET.

The study took place in three Australian regions, selected to represent (1) a provincial centre, (2) a remote rural centre, and (3) a major metropolitan centre.

The two industry sectors targeted to furnish data from these regions were the food processing and clerical industry sectors. The food processing sector represents one whose involvement within VET is growing, yet remains peripheral to the mainstream vocational education system. The clerical industry has long been the focus of vocational education provisions, which include formal offerings, institutional specialisation and core teaching activities.

The data-gathering focused upon three areas of concern. Firstly, to determine the degree of change from an 'industry-led' provision of VET—with its focus on national uniformity, national core curriculum, and national recognition of skills—to an 'enterprise-focused' provision of VET. And, if so, to understand the likely consequences of such a change. Secondly, to determine how the current provision of vocational education in these regions addresses the needs of the four client groups. Thirdly, the project aimed to determine the needs and aspirations of each of the client groups, and how they can best be reconciled in the provision of VET. It is held that maturity in a vocational education system is more likely to be realised by addressing mutuality in the needs and interests of all its client groups, rather than allowing domination by just one (Billett et al. 1997).

The data used to construct this case study were drawn from a number of sources.

Firstly, the data gathered for this project focused upon the three concerns just outlined. The data-gathering strategies comprised structured interviews and focus groups, with subjects representing the views of industry, community, enterprises and individuals. Industry representatives were from ITABs and technical and further education (TAFE) curriculum sections with responsibility for the 'industry-led' VET provisions in that sector. Essentially, these were spokespersons for government policy who advanced the bi-partite views of industry. Representatives from enterprises came from the food processing and clerical sectors. Community representatives were those who spoke on behalf of the regions. Individuals comprised prospective, current and past students, who were both surveyed and participated in focus groups. The sampling and data-gathering did not seek to be exhaustive or wholly representative. Such a claim would be illusory. Rather, it elicited understandings and ideas from representatives of the two industries, enterprises within those industries, the local community, and individuals who were prospective, existing or past students in courses servicing those industries. The interviews of enterprises, and community representatives, focus groups and surveys of students, were undertaken with individuals from the provincial centre region. Industry representatives were those from State ITABs and TAFE curriculum officers who have responsibilities for the selected industry sectors.

In presenting the data in this case study, some conventions have been adopted. The respondents themselves remain anonymous. However, as it is important to identify which interests they represent, the responses are designated as community (C), industry (I), enterprise (E) and students (S). For students, there is a further delineation into those who were part of a focus group (FG) and those who were the product of a survey (SU). Additional detail is provided about the standing of the informant(s) when appropriate. The data from the interviews and focus groups were transcribed and tabulated—and summaries of this qualitative data are presented in tables. The data from the surveys of prospective, current and past students are also presented in tables within the case study. The respondents to the provincial centre survey were predominantly female (71 per cent), part-time students (58 per cent) and studying wholly at college (56 per cent); the most common age group was 30–39 years (24 per cent), and typically were or are enrolled in certificate level courses. The students who responded to the survey have characteristics similar to those in the graduate destination survey (GDS) referred to below.

A second data set is comprised of existing statistical information on the area and students from the region. These comprise Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data from the 1995 census, documents from local development agencies that draw upon their own surveys and specific ABS data, and the 1997 TAFE GDS. The ABS data were used to furnish demographic data about the region. The data from local development agencies were used to indicate measures of economic activity. The GDS survey was managed by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) on behalf of the Australian National Training Authority. The GDS survey is used to present data about students who undertook studies at either provincial centre no.1 (PCIT#1) or provincial centre

no.2 (PCIT#2). The graduate surveys, which were based around each institute, furnished demographic data about graduates, the industries they were likely to be employed in, reasons for attending the course, details of those courses, and a range of data on benefits and satisfaction outcomes. Although not specific to the two selected industry sectors, the data were useful in determining how the current provisions are perceived to be addressing graduates' needs. The samples were respectably large (228 from PCIT#1, 1219 from PCIT#2). However, two limitations of the survey data need to be stated. Firstly, not all graduates responded to the survey, so the data represent respondents only. Second, only graduates of courses with duration of 200 hours were surveyed.

The third data source is comprised of documents provided by local development agencies. These documents furnished information about the region's economic activities and goals for economic development.

The case study is structured as follows:

- A brief overview of the region is provided.
- Data on the changing relationships of decision-making in VET are presented and discussed.
- Data depicting the current provisions of VET and how the four client groups are presented and discussed.
- Data on the ideals, aspirations and needs of the client groups are presented and discussed.

Section 1: An overview of the region

The tertiary educational provision available in this region permits access to locals, attracts students to the region, and inhibits the need for local students to leave in order to access tertiary education options. A community representative (C2) claimed that before university campuses were established in the region about 500 young people left the region per year to access a university education. Although not all higher education needs can be met within the region, it now attracts students from other regions, thereby maintaining a base of young people.

In the statistical district that comprises this region, manufacturing is the major source of employment (18 per cent)—ahead of retailing (16 per cent), health and community services (10.5 per cent), education (7.9 per cent) and government agencies/defence (7.7 per cent) (DPC 1996). Profiles of enterprises in the region emphasise the roles of large enterprises which produce food for humans and their pets, as well as paper, textile and automotive component manufacture. Females represent 45 per cent of the workforce (DPC 1996). Manufacturing as a percentage of the local workforce has remained constant between 1977 and 1997 (DPC 1997). In the food processing sector, there are a number of large enterprises engaged in processing local products into processed food and ingredient for processing elsewhere. Service and support industries (business services, utilities, health) account for the greatest recent growth in the region (DPC 1997). The population of the region has grown 16 per cent between 1986

and 1996. However, trend indicators of different kinds suggest that investment in the region has either stagnated over the past five years (e.g. retail, office space, hotel/motel) or has declined (e.g. private investment trends) in real terms and against the Australian average since 1994 (DPC 1997).

Of the region's population, over 95 per cent are either Australian born or from English speaking countries (see table A1.1). Five percent of the population is from non-English speaking background countries. The indigenous population comprises about 1.2 per cent of the population. These data are used to make comparisons across the three regions to determine whether there are significant differences in the composition of the population, and hence the student cohort in each region. It might be expected that participation in vocational education provisions should reflect these broad demographic characteristics.

Table A1.1: Selected ABS data from the provincial centre region

	PCIT#1		PCIT#2	
Population	48 630		41 769	
Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander population (%)	761	(1.6%)	279	(0.6%)
Non-English speaking background population (%)	2 316	(4.7%)	2 305	(5.5%)
Median age	33		31	

Source: ABS 1996, selected characteristics.

Having provided a brief sketch of the region, the next section presents and discusses data on changing relationships between industry and enterprises in decision-making about VET provisions and curriculum.

Section 2: Changing relationships

Changes towards an enterprise focus within VET

Subjects representing industry and enterprise perspectives were asked to furnish evidence of any change in the relationship between industry-based provisions of vocational education and those which represent enterprise-based provisions. Subsequently, the subjects were asked about the likely effects of such a shift. Table A1.2 provides aggregated summaries of the evidence from the industry and enterprise informants that such a shift is taking place. In the right column of this table, the client group is identified. In the left column the evidence of a shift is presented, identifying those informants who furnished the evidence. From this table, informants representing both industry and enterprises were in overall agreement that the focus for VET provisions was being directed towards individual enterprises.

The industry informants proposed that the evidence for this claim is in terms of the types of provisions which were being enacted currently, the customisation taking place or about to take place, and the views about variations in provisions—all of which have an enterprise focus (see table A1.2). Enterprise informants referred to the quality of negotiations, the mechanisms that were permitting or inhibiting their needs to be accommodated, and the on-the-job training provisions. All of this indicates a shift, or attempts to address enterprise

needs in a more concerted way. However, there were differences in terms of the two industry sectors. The stranding within the Certificate of Food Processing (CFP) permitted an initial addressing of sub-sectoral (enterprise) needs which was not available in the clerical industry sector. Also, the evidence of large enterprises' negotiation of courses was differentiated. In the food processing sector this negotiation consisted of the tailoring of modules within the CFP to the needs of the enterprises. In addition, the courses were offered on the job at the enterprises in ways that suited best their needs. The negotiation in the clerical industry is more problematic because its definition as an industry does not hold. Rather, it is a service sector that addresses the needs of a range of industry sectors. Hence, beliefs about generic skills that are applicable across these sectors appear to underpin the curriculum arrangements. However, there were diverse views about the degree to which, and at what level, there was commonality in clerical work. Large enterprises had requirements that courses would address the needs of their enterprise in terms of both the application of particular skills, and also become involved in the 'industry'-specific activities (e.g. health service, retail). However, the formal provision of courses was more standardised in this sector than in food processing, and almost universally based in the educational institution.

Table A1.2: Shift to enterprise focus

Industry
On-the-job provisions (I1)
Customisation of training; training packages (I2, I3, I4, I5, I6)
Shift in public provision (I4)
Still retaining an industry influence (I5, I6)
Happening in different ways in different enterprises (I2)
Enterprise
Negotiation of course content and outcomes (E1, E6, E7)
Strands within food processing (E2)
Ability to select modules to address needs (E3)
Concerns about the degree of tailoring occurring (E6)
Satisfaction with facilitated approach (E8)
On-the-job provisions reflect shift (E9)
Difficulty of small business to establish relationships with providers (E9)

Across the subjects that represented views of industry and enterprise there was overall agreement that the focus for VET provisions was being directed towards individual enterprises. From the industry representatives, the evidence for this claim is in terms of the types of provisions currently being enacted, the customisation taking place or about to take place, and the views about variations in provisions (see table A1.2). Enterprise representatives spoke about the quality of negotiations, the mechanisms that are permitting or inhibiting their needs to be accommodated, and the on-the-job training provisions. There was no key discernible difference between the two industry sectors in terms of expectation and demands (discussed in detail below). However, the stranding of the food industry facilitated enterprise needs to be addressed, and offers the potential for this to be undertaken in ways that also address individuals' goals of certification and portability, and industry concerns with common standards.

Table A1.3 provides summarised statements of issues arising from the shift to an enterprise-focused provision of VET. Issues identified by industry and enterprise informants are shown in the left column. The industry informants' concerns were quite distinct from those of enterprises. The latter focused on concerns about the specific qualities of enterprise-based provisions, in terms of content and goals, and as a consequence of the erosion of national curriculum goals and problems for certification for employees (table 1.3). In addition, system concerns emerged associated with short-termism in enterprise goals, and the potential division of VET provisions into those that can be provided through the public system and those solely accessible within enterprises.

Table A1.3: Issues arising from enterprise focus

Industry
Eroding the portability of qualifications (I1, I6, I7)
Specificity of content and outcomes (parochial–customisation) (I3, I5, I7)
Erosion of national curriculum goals (I3)
Fragmentation of curriculum (I4)
Short-termism of educational goals (I3)
Potential for VET to be delineated by a public-private dichotomy (I4)
Enterprise
Longer duration (higher award) courses offered through TAFE—shorter courses through enterprises (E1)
Has to be enterprise driven (E1, E3, E5, E10)
Retain national qualifications (E4, E9)
Common base of skills still required (E4)
More negotiation required (E5, E3, E6, E7)
Requires intimate knowledge of enterprise, structure, staff and goals (E7)
Developing enterprise capacity to train (E8, E10)
Fair to employees—not inhibited by too specific provisions (E9)

From the enterprise perspective, the most common concern was with securing a tighter enterprise focus. It was held that the VET system had to be driven by enterprise needs and that more negotiation was required to address these needs, requiring providers to develop an intimate knowledge of the enterprise, its goals and staff. However, from one clerical employer there was some recognition of the need for a common base of portable skills. Concerns were raised by others that courses negotiated at the enterprise level had to carry nationally accepted recognition. In addition, for one food processing employer, the enterprise-based provisions had to be fair to employees. That is, these programs should not be so specific as to extinguish the aspirations of their employees. However, this was not a commonly expressed concern. The relationship between providers and enterprises was marked in other ways. Enterprises were held to be likely to provide shorter duration programs, whereas institutes of TAFE should offer longer programs (proposed one clerical sector employer). The development of the capacity for enterprises to offer programs 'in-house' was seen as a role for providers, particularly TAFE. However, not all enterprises wished to manage the training of their employees. They viewed this to be the role for providers such as TAFE, who had the appropriate expertise. In all, enterprises wished to have access to this expertise, with provisions tailored to their needs either through enterprise-based or provider-furnished provisions that addressed their specific workplace needs.

In sum, the informants confirmed that a shift was occurring, or had occurred, from VET provisions addressing primarily industry needs (uniform national curriculum and standards) to addressing those of enterprises (customised arrangements and an enterprise influenced selection of content and intents). This was more directly prevalent in the food processing industry, with its strands, employees and emerging demand for VET provisions, than in the clerical sector. It should be emphasised, again, that the majority of food processing courses are offered off-campus, whereas courses for the clerical sector are campus-based and participants (students) are less likely to be employees. Enterprises in the food industry have to fund their provision directly. Equally, the strands within the CFP necessitate consideration of particular needs of the enterprise in terms of transforming the generic and strand content of the course. These needs precipitate tailoring of both content and intents (aims, goals and objectives). As the courses for the clerical sector are already in existence and largely offered through a college-based provision, and are not for employees, there appears to be less direct demand for tailoring. However, there was an expectation that these courses will also address the particular needs of the local enterprises.

Client groups delineated concerns arising from the shift to an enterprise focus. Industry informants were concerned about the erosion of national curriculum and certification, as well as the potential for VET provisions to become too enterprise-specific in terms of content and goals. Understandable from an enterprise perspective was the requirement for courses to intimately address their needs and be customised accordingly. This posture is most understandable when the course was funded by the enterprise. However, this was not always the case, particularly in the clerical sector. Yet, it seems that enterprises can demand such customisation from providers in an increasingly competitive VET market, in ways which may or may not be mindful of industry concerns and goals. Enterprises want providers to develop rich and intimate understandings of their needs, have staff at the ready, and tailor national prescription to the enterprise's own particular needs. However, it would seem that only the largest of enterprises would contemplate such interaction with multiples of providers in a true market sense. In particular, it seems unlikely that providers will be able to provide rich analyses of small businesses' needs in a lean, market-based situation. Indeed, one of the largest non-TAFE providers of entry-level training offers very generic and non-specific initial training to trainees, in order to maintain viability. There was, however, an expectation from small enterprises that their needs will need to be met.

Emerging concerns for other client groups include: (i) the separation of courses into those which were publicly and privately funded, (ii) courses whose participants were likely to be employees or not employed, and (iii) short courses, such as initial preparation, being offered in the workplace, while higher level and longer duration of courses being only offered through educational institutions. Such divisions erode opportunities for those entering the workforce, engaging in entry-level training, and seeing employment and preparation linked at a time of high unemployment and stagnant economic development.

For individuals, this shift means that workplace-based provisions may discriminate against those not in employment, whereas those in employment are more likely to only access provisions customised or selected for the particular workplace. What is proposed here, and in the 'What is' section, is that enterprises want two levels of customisation. Firstly, that the particular content and goals for the program need to address the requirements for vocational practice in the enterprise. Second, that these activities are also integrated with the particular organisational practice within the enterprise. Such an outcome could be positive for individuals where opportunities for advancement and career development exist—that is, where a specialism has the potential to address the aspiration and needs of individuals. However, alternatively, where such progression is not possible, these provisions may well inhibit individuals' aspirations and potential. In addition, it was evident that enterprise-based provisions are not allowing individuals to complete certification requirements, thereby inhibiting portability.

For the community, this shift may mean that enterprises have more tailored training provisions, which directly enhance their productivity. Equally, these provisions may provide access to educational provisions for workers who have never enjoyed such opportunities. Yet concerns for communities include the long-term consequences of such enterprise-specific arrangements—particularly for those who are not employed—and for the ability of workers to deploy their vocational practice when they experience severance from their employer. So there are individual and community issues in these arrangements.

Addressing the needs of industry, enterprises, individuals and regions

A concern guiding this study was that, although the focus of VET provisions is changing, that change is from one set of interests (industry) to another (enterprises). However, mutuality of needs of all the key stakeholders (industry, enterprises, individuals, regions) is proposed as a means by which the full potential of VET can be realised and its maturity found (Billett et al. 1997). Informants from all four client groups were asked how best the needs of enterprises, individuals and communities could be addressed in curriculum planning. Their responses to how this goal might be achieved are reported and discussed below.

Overall, there was little in the way of overt rejection of addressing the mutual needs of all four client groups. However, issues about readiness, sectional interests, legislative imperatives (NSW versus Victoria), the particular requirements of enterprises, and the difficulty with consultative processes, were used to detail the complexity of this task. The responses were diverse, but categorisable under three headings: (i) consultation, (ii) sectional interests, and (iii) co-ordination. Summaries of the data containing client perspectives of those identifying with the responses are depicted in table A1.4. In this table, factors which support the ideas under the heading are depicted in the left column and those in the right listing those factors perceived likely to inhibit this approach to reconciling need. The three approaches are discussed in the following sections.

Table A1.4: Perspectives on realising mutuality of need

Consultation —*factors supporting*	**Consultation**—*factors inhibiting*
Being consulted—involved in planning and development (I1, I2, C3)	Enterprise short-termism (I3)
It already happens (E1)	Adequate representation (I4)
Meet all needs (E2, E6)	Frequency of process (I1, I4)
Local planning is important (E3, C2, C4)	Loss of less powerful voices (E1)
Benefits in institutional and workplace provisions (E10)	Difficulties of collaboration in market situation (C4)
Market not in community interest (C2)	Cannot be all things to all people (C5)
Need to account for individual needs (FG2)	Focus groups swamped by numbers of players (C2)
Options should be fostered (FG6)	Securing balance between educational and enterprise needs (C4)
Representations to advocate and present a case (C3)	Each group has different needs (E6, FG3, FG5)
Sectional interests—*factors supporting*	**Sectional interests**—*factors inhibiting*
Students do not know what they want (E6)	Students benefit from a range of experiences (E8)
Enterprise focus provides for students' development (E8, FG4, FG6)	More required than learning in one context (C1)
If enterprises prosper so do employees and region (E9, FG5, E8)	Too reactive at the moment (C7, FG3)
Benefits in institutional and workplace provisions (E10)	Any sectional interests exclusive (FG3, FG4, FG5)
Enterprise can identify needs (FG1, FG4)	
Higher productivity, etc. (FG1)	
Training has to relate to enterprise needs (FG2)	
Co-ordination—*factors supporting*	**Co-ordination**—*factors inhibiting*
Cannot reconcile until VET understood by all parties (I5)	Focus groups swamped by numbers of players (C2)
Artificial division of interests (I5)	Difficulties of collaboration in a market situation (C4)
Too many individual offerings (I5)	Securing balance between educational and enterprise needs (C4)
Ill-focused efforts (I5)	
To be undertaken by or involving TAFE (E3, C1, C6)	
Local planning important (E3, C2, C4, C5)	
Community needs identified and drawn upon (E4, C5)	
Students do not know what they want (E6)	
Each group has different needs (E6)	
Ability exists to co-ordinate activities (C4)	
Market not in community interest (C2)	
Benefits in institutional and workplace provisions (E10)	
Need to be strategic and prioritise (C5, C6)	
Need to account for individual needs (FG2)	
Options should be fostered (FG6)	
Representations to advocate and present a case (C3)	

Consultation

Consultative processes that engaged and addressed the interests of all parties were broadly advocated. These processes were proposed as a means of meeting all client groups' needs, at the regional level. Concerns were expressed about the adequacy of market-based approaches used as a substitute for planning, when they failed to address local needs. The consultative approach to planning was held to offer the chance for the region to develop and submit a consolidated case to State or federal decision-makers and funding bodies.

However, this approach to planning was also viewed as problematic because of differing needs (e.g. short-term and specific enterprise needs versus educational goals) which may not be readily reconcilable through consultation. It was also held that the process might be dominated by those with the resources available and interest to participate. Added to this was concern that the demands of the market would inhibit fruitful consultations. Aligned with these concerns were those of enterprises who claimed that participation in such arrangements in the past were frustrated by the apparent irrelevance of what was discussed and proposed.

The consultative approach enjoys support from industry, community, enterprises and students. Industry and community representatives proposed most of the factors identified as inhibiting this approach.

Sectional interests

Sectional interests, and particularly those of enterprises, were proposed as a means of advancing the needs of all other client groups' interests. The proposal typified in the data was as follows. If enterprises prosper, they will provide employment and career progression for local individuals, the community will prosper, and industry goals for levels of skilfulness will accordingly be addressed (table A1.4). It was proposed that students' needs will be addressed through the provision of rich experiences in the workplace. Equally, it was claimed that not all client groups warrant equal legitimacy for inclusion. For example, students may not know what they need to learn. In other cases, it has been also suggested that enterprises don't really understand their needs or the processes for best realising their needs. Benefits in the form of greater interaction between enterprises and educational institutions were also proposed as likely to accrue.

Countering these views were concerns about a lack of diversity in student experiences, and the reactive nature and highly specific focus of VET provisions in the workplace. That is, there were concerns that the full range of needs and requirements of the community and those who lived within it are not likely to be addressed. Enterprise informants and focus groups of informants employed in the food processing industry proposed the sectoral-based approach to addressing the needs of all client groups, whereas community informants and students (both employed and non-employed) were more likely to identify the shortcomings of this approach.

Co-ordination

The co-ordination of VET provisions was proposed to plan and manage the needs of the four client groups. However, without an understanding of VET by all client groups, broad consultation was seen to be premature and problematic because the different needs may fail to be reconciled. The co-ordinated approach was proposed by an industry informant as the means to address the artificial divisions of interests among the client groups, and as a means to consider the range of provisions more objectively. The need to involve providers such as

TAFE was proposed by community and enterprise informants, in an approach to local planning that identifies and draws upon community needs. It was stated that such a process has potential to be strategic and avoid reactive and short-termist market-based provisions. Again, such a process could result in a consolidated case to engage in negotiations with State and federal decision-makers and funding bodies.

All four client groups were represented in advocating the co-ordination approach, with shortcomings being proposed by community informants.

So, in sum, the broad-based support for planning VET provisions that address all client groups' needs was apparent. This support was polarised around the processes of best reconciling those needs, and concerns about which voices should be heard, the informed nature of those voices, and mechanisms to reduce the differences in interests and the ability of the market to address needs. Opposing this is a market-based stratagem that subordinates planning to an inevitable outcome of market forces and needs within the community.

It seems that, if co-ordination and consultation were to be undertaken in ways that managed and balanced the needs and inputs of the client groups, together they might offer a way of proceeding—given the marketplace and the uneven knowledge of VET across all client groups. However, such a process is only likely to be successful if it is perceived to be taking into account all interests, including those most able to contribute (e.g. providers anxious to secure market share, and powerful economic or governmental voices). A balance has to be struck between a process that permits enterprise needs to be addressed and supported, and one that prevents a raft of individualised offerings so idiosyncratic that both individuals' and industry goals are jeopardised. For instance, although the CFP offers flexibility, the non-completion rates of participants is too high for industry goals to be realised. Equally, with clerical work some content and intents need to be identified that are both generic to the industry (e.g. keyboarding) and specific to enterprise needs. The likelihood of achieving this balance will not be uniform and, as the delineation between public and privately funded provisions widen, it becomes more difficult to realise.

Having presented and briefly discussed the data on planning, the four groups' views on how vocational educators should best address this changing balance is presented and discussed next.

Roles for and characteristics of vocational educators

Subjects from all client groups were asked about how vocational educators could assist developing curriculum provisions that address the needs of the community, enterprises and individuals. The responses were diverse and plentiful, and are best presented under the heading of the *Roles of vocational educators*, and a subsidiary heading addressing educators' characteristics. Data on vocational educators' roles warrant further delineation in order to best categorise the respondents' views. These categories are: (i) consultant,

(ii) curriculum developer, (iii) instructor, (iv) advocate and supporter of learners, and (v) policy developer. An atypical response worthy of note is that only people within the enterprise should conduct teaching (E10). Table A1.5a presents the summarised data from the interviews and focus groups, categorised to form subheadings with the items which sit within the categories arrayed below. Respondents who are associated with the items are identified to the right of the item.

Table A1.5a: Roles of vocational educators

Consultant and educational leader—*dimensions of role*
Negotiating with enterprises (I4, I6, E1, E2, E7, C7, FG4)
Identify how you can help (E3, E7)
Knowledgeable in many areas (E6, C7)
Independent consultant and 'honest broker' (I2)
Demonstrating benefits of course (E7)
Add value to enterprise need analysis (I3, E7)
Understand enterprise perspective (E8, C1)
Provide leadership for community (C2)
Curriculum developer—*dimensions of role*
Adapting programs to enterprise needs (E1, E2, E3, E8, E9, FG1)
Determine need of enterprise (I3, I6, E2)
Identifying full range of needs (I4, E1)
Frequent interactions with enterprises to understand needs (I7, E4, E5, E6, C4)
Instructor—*dimensions of role*
Good teacher—varied teaching methods and presentation skills (E2, E5, E6, C1, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, FG1, FG3, FG6)
Just be a teacher (E3, C1, C4, C5)
Provide practical instruction and opportunities to practice (E4, C6, FG5)
Concerned about learning and transfer (E5, C3, FG1, FG3, FG)
Communicate clearly with students (C6, FG1, FG5, FG6)
Tailoring instructional needs to the workplace (E5)
Advocate and supporter of learners—*dimensions of role*
Supporter, mentor and advocate for students (C3, FG2, FG3, FG4, FG5)
Compassionate about students (C6)
Motivates students and builds interest (FG1)
Understand student readiness to progress (FG3)
Counsel on pathways (FG5)
Policy developer—*dimensions of role*
Need to be aligned to and inform policy (I5)

The data from the student survey conducted for this study are depicted in table A1.5b. This table indicates the frequency and percentage of responses from past, current and prospective students, concerning what they believe should constitute the roles of a vocational educator.

Table A1.5b: Roles of vocational educators—student survey

Item	Past		Current		Prospective	
	Count	(%)	Count	(%)	Count	(%)
Good teacher	12	(55%)	20	(29%)	27	(39%)
Counsellor	1	(5%)	10	(15%)	9	(13%)
Career advisor	1	(5%)	4	(6%)	5	(7%)
Friend	2	(9%)	4	(6%)	5	(7%)
Other	1	(5%)	13	(19%)	3	(4%)
Don't know/no answer	5	(23%)	18	(26%)	21	(30%)
Total	**22**		**69**		**70**	

Consultant

It was from industry and enterprise informants, including student focus groups from within an enterprise, that the role of the educator as a consultant was most readily identified and supported. Community informants proposed interactions with enterprises, and an educational leadership role in the community. This role involves vocational educators negotiating and consulting with enterprises to identify and realise their needs; the role includes demonstrating the utility of the proposed course to the enterprise, with the educator having the ability to add something themselves to the enterprise's training needs and arrangements: adding value. Within this role, the ability to negotiate with enterprises is supported most strongly. So, educational leadership is manifested in two quite different ways: leadership in the community, and an ability to add value to enterprise needs.

Curriculum developer

Again, informants from industry and enterprises propose that curriculum development is largely about the ability to identify the full range of enterprise needs and then adapt programs to meet this need. Frequent interactions between educators and enterprises were proposed as a means of securing an understanding of their needs. So this role in developing educational provisions was most legitimated when the focus of determining educational intent and the context of courses was posited at the enterprise level of determination.

Instructor

Alone, industry informants did not emphasise the role of being a 'good teacher'—characterised in terms of teaching methods and presentation skills—as did the three other groups. The ability to furnish opportunities to develop 'practical' skills was emphasised, as was the need to tailor instructional procedures to the exigencies of the workplace. Student groups proposed communicating clearly with students. Within these aspects of the role was a demand to address students' learning and the transfer of the learnt knowledge.

Advocate and supporter of learners

From the community and student informants was a demand for the educator to be compassionate about students, facilitate their development through support and guidance, and to be a source of motivation. Understanding students' needs was extended to an appreciation of their readiness to progress. Being supportive of students extends to providing advice on pathways through educational provisions and concerns.

Policy developer

One industry informant emphasised the reciprocal relationship between policy development and teachers' practice, emphasising teachers' involvement in formulating policy, but also being guided in their practice by policy.

Characteristics of vocational educators

In addition to roles for vocational educators, the subjects proposed characteristics concerning how educators should conduct themselves. These are as follows:

- content wise (having good industry knowledge, experience, spending time in the workplace)
- expert in the area
- flexible
- communicator
- add value to work
- practical in approach
- professional in approach

The shift to an enterprise-based provision of vocational education was evident in the responses to the roles of vocational educators. In particular, the determination of curriculum intents (aims, goals, and objectives) was seen to, of necessity, reflect enterprise requirements. However, the different interests of the client groups are reflected here. Even where there was an apparently common view (e.g. the role of an instructor), the intent differed. Enterprise viewed the role of instruction as teaching the things the enterprise needs in ways that address the participants' needs. The students' responses support the former in terms of relevance, rather than enterprise-specific learning, but the latter in the same way as the enterprises. Yet it was in the advocate role where there was a concentration of student needs (see table A1.5b)—not all of which are easily reconcilable with the characterisation of the consultant and curriculum developer roles which were so strongly proposed by enterprises.

Curriculum development was seen as situating curriculum at the enterprise level, albeit adapting industry prescriptions to enterprise needs. Such an approach is analogous to the school-based curriculum movement (e.g. Skilbeck 1984), although determination of intent is focused only upon two sets of interests. The implementation of curriculum (instruction) was seen as a process

of good teaching, to realise the goals set by enterprises. Addressing learners' needs was very much in terms of their ability to achieve what has been set for them by industry and enterprise. Consideration of individuals' aspirations are very restricted here, other than the provision of advice about which given educational or career pathways were most appropriate.

The concern here is that of the robustness of the knowledge and the potential for transfer. Current views suggest that ideas about generic competencies fail to define or permit transfer (Stevenson 1996; Beven 1997). Nor can it be assumed that transferable knowledge can be secured in either the classroom or the workplace, without enriching the learning experiences in these settings. This may be achieved by making accessible the knowledge likely to transfer, and then advancing prospects for transfer through a consideration of the application of that knowledge to other circumstances. Such instructional interventions require planning, an appreciation of the formulation of educational intents and processes, careful implementation by the teacher, and solid engagement by the learners. All of these are unlikely to be secured by workplace practitioners who are unaware of these requirements or inexperienced in the application of techniques associated with maximising transfer (Billett 1996).

In the shift to an enterprise focus, the data above set out a significant change in vocational educators' roles. Throughout the last decade of industry domination of the curriculum processes, teachers have been valued as 'implementers' whose role was to uniformly implement that which was determined by others. Now, the demands articulated here refer to a teacher being an adapter, designer and researcher (to use Marland's categories cited in Print [1987]). It is unclear that, after more than a decade of efforts to secure subservience to industry mandations, how vocational educators will best be able to shift readily to the new roles required of them, in ways that secure educational goals for all client groups.

Perspectives on community service obligations

Community and industry representatives were asked what they understood by the term 'community service obligations' (CSO) (see table A1.6a), and also about their relationship to the market (see table A1.6b). These data were gathered to gauge whether the key role in public provision of vocational education—to promote wide access, and support, for those who might be disadvantaged in the labour market—still has currency with these client groups. The importance of gaining insights into this issue, and the others below, was not just to appraise changing views but also to understand the perspectives of these views. If, for instance, one view predominates, it is important to critically appraise this view. Equally, as new views begin to have their impact (e.g. enterprise, community), it is important to understand what perspective their views carry. Moreover, it was necessary to understand the degree to which these voices are 'informed'. The two issues addressed here are, firstly, perceptions of what should comprise community service obligations, and, secondly, what relationships are proposed between these obligations and the pressures of the market. So the data

summarised in table A1.6 represent the views of industry and community informants, under subheadings that state the conceptions of CSO, and how these were positioned in relation to the market. To the right of the responses these subheadings are identified, as are the subjects who proposed and support these items.

Table A1.6a: Conceptions of community service obligations

Act within the community (I3, I4, C1, C2, C6)
Addressing disadvantage—access and equity—under-achievers (I5, C2, C3)
Industry obligation with work practice (I2, I4)
Permit access to courses (I2, I7)
Accessibility at an appropriate level to justify government funding (I6, C1)
Selection criteria used for entrance into courses—no CSO (I1)
Dual responsibility between government and recipient (C3)
Aiding disadvantage is an unfair tax on all (C4)
Up-skill workforce (C5)

Table A1.6b: Balance between market and CSO

Legislation required to counter market excesses (I2)
Market proposes flexibility, but also creates instability and disadvantage (e.g. small business and remote communities) (I4, I5)
Loss of focus on longer term goals (I5)
Public funds surplus after market oriented goals have been addressed are for use of CSO (I6)
Pursuit of market goals may result in the neglect of local need (C2)
Industry–community partnerships address needs of migrants (C3)
Fight welfare mentality: 'Only when it's relevant to industry should it be supported by the public purse' (C4)
Private sector success predicates ability to furnish CSO (C5)
For VET to be viable, has to engage the market (C6)
Programs would not be viable without public funding (VET-in-schools) (C7)

The responses reported in table A1.6a varied from those who provided interpretations that carried with them particular sets of values, to those that interpreted the concept in a particular way. Of the former, statements included those about the importance of access and equity, the response about addressing CSO as a means to qualify for government funding, and the view that suggested aiding the disadvantage was an unfair tax on all. Particular interpretations referred to industry obligations in the workplace, emphasising the need for safe working practice in the food processing industry. Others interpreted the question to be associated with a community focus of 'acting within the community'. This range of responses was indicative of a concept that has a particular meaning, seen as central to the public provision of vocational education in the past. Some of these interpretations suggested that, as a wider range of interests are brought to play in decision-making within VET and their existing values are likely to come under challenge, the views of particular interests may seek to transform key values and priorities for vocational education.

The question about appropriate balance between CSOs and the market elicited responses that noted both concerns about and support for the market (see table

A1.6 b). Industry informants proposed the need for legislation to address excesses of the market, the failure of the market to deliver flexibility, and concerns about a longer term view than can be realised through market-based approaches. Community respondents expressed concerns about local needs being neglected, the need for partnerships, and the need for public funding to keep programs viable. The latter comment was from a respondent with a core interest in VET-in-schools programs. Those supportive of the market approach emphasised that private sector success underwrites the provision of CSO, and that only when it was relevant to industry should CSOs be supported by the public purse. Such a view is particularly curious and contradictory: supporting success in the marketplace, yet emphasising the need to rid the community of such support when it is directed at individuals who are in need of support. Finally, a community view stated that VET has to engage in the market to be viable. Evidence above suggests that this message has already been acknowledged and acted upon in the region. Other ways to secure clients' needs may well serve the region far better. Certainly, the data below on the performance of the TAFE institute cast doubts on easy criticisms of the TAFE provision.

Changing relationships

There is evidence that relationships within decision-making are changing. Within those relationships, there is a new emphasis on enterprises: conceptions of how the planning for, and practice within, VET curriculum is being transformed. Beyond expectations of teachers' practice are transformations in the nature of how curriculum intents are to be negotiated and implemented. The enterprise focus privileges a view of curriculum planning that reflects particular sectoral interests—presumably, at least in part, at a cost to others. The needs of other client groups are not always readily or easily aligned with these particular interests. Concerns about specificity and the reactive nature of the enterprise focus was raised in reference to the likely impact of the enterprise focus, and of a planning approach that denies other voices. Equally, the roles and expectations of vocational educators are not always easily reconciled with the demands of enterprises and students. Even community interests, which are often aligned to enterprise requirements, do not always sit comfortably with all their perspectives. However, enterprise funding of their own VET provisions adds legitimacy to their demands for customised training. Coincidentally, market considerations are perhaps making the provisions, such as those offered by TAFE, reactive rather than responsive. All of this suggests that, in different ways, the decision-making within VET provisions and curriculum is being transformed by factors associated with the market. The concern is whether these are in the best interests of all client groups.

So, approaches to reconciling all these needs are likely to be problematic. In order to appraise more fully how these concerns might be advanced, the next section furnishes an array of data about what is the current state of vocational education provisions in the regions at a general level, and then specifically for the food processing and clerical sectors. This is to be used as a basis to

consider—in the 'What should' section—the ideals of the four client groups, whilst trying to fashion a response that seeks to reconcile and address the needs of these four groups.

Section 3: 'What is'

Individuals

The data on individuals' participation in VET at the provincial centre are of two kinds: those derived from the graduate survey, which are general in kind, and those from the surveys and focus groups administered specifically for this project. The former is global data drawn from graduates of provincial centre institute of TAFE no.1 and provincial centre institute of TAFE no.2, who responded to the graduate survey—a nationally funded study of satisfaction with TAFE provisions. The second set of data is from respondents for enterprises, industry and students associated with the clerical and food processing industries, and representatives of the provincial centre community. The data on individuals are organised under the headings of *profile of participants*, *modes of study*, and *satisfaction with course*. All of the data will ultimately be compared across the three regional sites being accessed in this project. In particular, much of the analysis of the survey will be reserved for cross-regional analysis. It is presented here to inform this case study.

Profile of participants

From the graduate survey, a profile of the TAFE students in the provincial centre region can be constructed. This profile comprises information about the students, their positions within the industries in which they are employed, and their reasons for doing the course—as well as satisfaction with the course.

As stated in table A1.7, graduates from the two TAFE institutes in the provincial centre region were in their thirties, on average—older than their counterparts across Victoria and New South Wales, and in Australia as a whole. From the survey, a higher percentage of women have graduated from these two institutes than in either of the two States or nationally. Also, students with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background are more likely to have graduated here on average than throughout the two States or nationally. Conversely, graduates from a non-English speaking background are less frequent than is typical across the States or the nation. Students with disabilities are on par with national and State levels. Students at the two institutes are less likely to be unemployed when they commenced their course than counterparts in the two States and nationally. In terms of country of birth, graduates from the two institutes were more likely to be born in Australia than their counterparts in the two States or nationally. Consequently, they were considerably less likely to be born in a non-English speaking country than their counterparts at the State or national level.

This profile suggest an older cohort of students, typically female, Australian born, English speaking, who were likely to be employed when they commenced

their studies. There appears to be little difference in the participation of students in paid work, compared with students across the two States or nationally. Equally, it seems that the graduates were no more likely to be undertaking the course in a part-time mode than their counterparts elsewhere (NCVER 1997).

Table A1.7: Demographic and equity access groups (GDS 1997)

	PCIT#1	State	PCIT#2	State	Australia
Median age for graduates	34	26	30	29	28
Women graduates	62%	53%	64%	58%	56%
Graduates from ATSI background	3%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Graduates from NESB	10%	36%	14%	35%	32%
Graduates with disability	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Unemployed prior to commencing course	13%	22%	16%	18%	18%
Country of birth					
Australia (%)	203 (89%)	9154 (74%)	1087 (89%)	21 784 (72%)	44 766 (74%)
Other countries (NESB) (%)	7 (3%)	2484 (20%)	73 (6%)	6674 (22%)	11 668 (19%)

Source: Graduate destination survey (PCIT#1 and PCIT#2).

As tables A1.8 and A1.9 indicate, the industries and positions in which the graduates were likely to be employed reflect local industry sectors and positions requiring at least entry-level qualifications. The occupations emphasise the role of health and community service provisions and those for manufacturing. Further, the service-related themes are those related to retail and government, administration and defence. These industries may well reflect this provincial centre region's role as a provincial and manufacturing centre. These data will provide a useful comparison with the other cases.

Table A1.8: Industries in which graduates were most likely to have employment, at 30/5/97

Institute	Most	Second most	Third most
PCIT#1	42% Health and Community Services	18% Manufacturing	10% Government, administration and defence
PCIT#2	17% Retail trade	12% Manufacturing	10% Health and community services

Source: Graduate destination survey (PCIT#1 and PCIT#2).

Table A1.9: Most common occupational groups for graduates employed, at 30/5/97

Institute	Most	Second most	Third most
PCIT#1	22% Para-professionals	20% Salespersons and personal services workers	18% Labourers and related workers
PCIT#2	24% Tradespersons	18% Clerks	18% Salespersons and personal service

Note: Occupations based on Australian Standards Classification of Occupation (ASCO) codes.
Source: Graduate destination survey (PCIT#1 and PCIT#2).

Graduates and employment

The graduates from PCIT#1 reported higher employment than the national and State percentage, whereas PCIT#2 was consistent with both State and national percentages—as depicted in table A1.10. Both institutes' graduates reported lower percentages of unemployment than the State or the national average. In terms of graduates who were unemployed prior to commencing their TAFE course, PCIT#1 had a lower level than the State or national average, whereas PCIT#2 was higher than both State and national levels. Equally, graduates from PCIT#2 who undertook their study to gain employment, were slightly higher than both State and national averages, whereas PCIT#1 were comparable with State and national percentages.

Table A1.10: Graduates and employment

	PCIT#1	State	PCIT#2	State	Australia
Graduates employed	77%	71%	70%	71%	71%
Graduates unemployed	13%	17%	14%	15%	15%
Graduates unemployed before commencing their TAFE course, who found work by 30/5/97	41%	46%	52%	45%	46%
Graduates who gave their main reason for doing the course as 'to get a job (or own business)', employed by 30/5/97	60%	61%	64%	59%	61%

Source: Graduate destination survey (PCIT#1 and PCIT#2).

Modes

The Certificate level award was the most common at both institutes, as indicated in table A1.11. However, there was a significant difference in the most common and average time taken to complete these awards between the two institutes. The most commonly reported means of delivery was the same at both institutes—classes at college—although in both settings these were far from being uniform provisions, with those at PCIT#2 being barely typical.

Table A1.11: Course details

Course details	PCIT#1	PCIT#2
Most common qualification	Certificate/other	Certificate/other
Main method of delivery	Classes at college	Classes at college

Sources: Graduate destination survey (PCIT#1 and PCIT#2).

In terms of employment outcomes, graduates from both institutes were generally at least as likely to have secured employment as those in the two States and the nation as a whole, and on most measures were *more* likely, as stated above. The reasons graduates advanced after doing courses differed in emphasis between the two institutes, although this difference is probably explained by a slightly older cohort at PCIT#1. However, there were some differences in the time it took the graduates to complete their courses, with students at PCIT#2 taking between one-and-a-half or twice the length to complete their course than those at PCIT#1.

Satisfaction

Tables A1.12 to A1.14 report the graduates' responses to measures of satisfaction. Overall, these measures are reported in very positive terms. There is some variation between the two institutes, but key measures of satisfaction are shared at high levels. In particular, measures that are attributable to the activities and performance of the institutions and teachers are generally reportedly very positively. Interestingly, those measures that had less than State or national average levels of performance are attributable to factors outside the direct influence of educators or the educational institutions.

Table A1.12 depicts the data on five satisfaction measures associated with the outcomes of courses. Graduates' measures of having achieved their goals were, for PCIT#1, consistent with State and national percentages—but for PCIT#2 they were slightly higher. The measures of realising advancements in the workplace were not as high for either institute than they were for State and national percentages. Measures of relevance were, for both institutes, more or less consistent with national and State levels. However, levels of graduates who rated their courses at the two institutes as eight or more out of ten were considerably higher than both State and national levels. These data suggest that in the areas where the institutes could exert most leverage—the quality of courses for students—they were regarded positively. This is also reinforced by the data presented in table A1.14. When factors outside of the institute's control were used as measures (e.g. achievement of vocational goals, promotion, etc.), this coincided with lower ratings.

Table A1.12: Satisfaction outcomes

Percentage of graduates	PCIT#1	State	PCIT#2	State	Australia
Who cited vocational reasons as their main purpose for doing the course	82%	78%	70%	75%	77%
Who claimed they achieved, or partly achieved, their objectives for doing the course	76%	77%	79%	75%	78%
Who did the course for vocational reasons and who felt they had experienced improvements in remuneration, promotion or desired job	53%	65%	59%	62%	64%
Whose main reason for taking the course was vocational, and who were employed and thought the course was either relevant or somewhat relevant	81%	80%	77%	78%	79%
Who rated the course eight or more out of ten	77%	67%	77%	68%	68%

Source: Graduate destination survey (PCIT#1 and PCIT#2).

These overall positive measures are also evident in table A1.13. Perhaps most noteworthy are the low percentages of graduates claiming that they have received none of the benefits outlined above. Also noteworthy is the difference of the global measures between full- and part-time students at both institutes. The positive measures of relevance at both institutes are also contrary to the perceptions of some enterprise and industry informants. They have stated, in a

number of places in this case study, that the performance of TAFE and its teachers—and in particular the relevance of what they teach—is questionable. The data in this table will be most useful in cross-regional comparisons.

Table A1.13: Benefits and outcomes

Benefits	PCIT#1 full-time students (part-time students)	PCIT#2 full-time students (part-time students)
Increase in earnings	35% (38%)	35% (18%)
Promotion	28% (15%)	24% (9%)
Change of job; new job	24% (45%)	25% (27%)
Any of the above benefits	53% (68%)	59% (38%)
None of above benefits	47% (32%)	40% (61%)
Occupation most likely to receive increase in income	Para-professional (51%)	Tradesperson (45%)
Occupation least likely to receive increase in income	Labourer and related workers (19%)	Labourer and related workers (12%)
Relevance of the course		
Graduates' belief that course was of high or some relevance to their jobs	81%	77%
Graduates' belief that course was of very little or no relevance to their jobs	13%	20%

Source: Graduate destination survey (PCIT#1 and PCIT#2).

In table A1.14, data are presented on the ratings of eleven aspects of the courses in which the graduates were enrolled. The ratings are consistent for both institutes. In the left-hand column are the items; in the two columns to their right are the percentages for both institutes. The percentage without brackets is for a rating of eight, nine or ten out of ten; the percentage in brackets is for a rating between four and seven out of ten. The highest grades are for the teachers' knowledge and the overall quality of the course. Areas less positively appraised are associated with advice and information on courses and jobs. Only one measure goes below 50 per cent on a rating of between eight and ten.

Table A1.14: Ratings of aspects of courses

Items and rating	PCIT#1 rated 8–10 (rated 4–7)	PCIT#2 rated 8–10 (rated 4–7)
Your instructor's knowledge of course content	81% (18%)	81% (17%)
Overall quality of course	77% (22%)	77% (22%)
Convenience of venue and class times	73% (25%)	73% (23%)
Making assessment methods clear	67% (31%)	72% (25%)
Presentation of course material	63% (35%)	63% (35%)
Usefulness of course to job	69% (35%)	67% (28%)
Content reflecting industry practice	63% (26%)	64% (33%)
Quality of equipment	64% (34%)	64% (33%)
Balance between instruction and practice	57% (39%)	62% (35%)
Information received when choosing course, subjects and modules	58% (39%)	60% (34%)
Information about careers and jobs available	42% (47%)	41% (43%)

Source: Graduate destination survey (PCIT#1 and PCIT#2).

These measures of satisfaction from graduates are informative in highlighting the aggregated perceptions of graduates at the institutes. What they indicate is that graduates believe their course provisions to be well organised, their teachers knowledgeable and the courses relevant. Where ratings are not as high as others, or do not compare favourably with State or national factors, they are not directly attributable to factors for which the institute can be held accountable. So, overall, the graduates who responded to the GDS overwhelmingly supported the quality of the TAFE provisions offered through these institutes. That is, one client group (individuals) has expressed high levels of satisfaction at the way the VET provisions—as offered through TAFE institutes—have addressed their needs.

Measures of satisfaction were also elicited in the interviews and focus groups conducted for this project. Below, summaries of data from all four client groups are presented and discussed.

Client groups' satisfaction with VET provisions

Informants from all four client groups were asked to indicate what VET provisions existed, and how these addressed or failed to address their needs. Table A1.15 provides summary of this data. In the left-hand column, summaries of data are presented about how VET provisions are addressing the needs of industry, enterprises, regions and individuals, drawing upon informants from each of those groups. The summary statement is followed by the identity of the respondent. The right column follows the same format, providing summaries of ways in which these provisions are failing to address client groups' needs.

Table A1.15: Satisfaction with VET provisions

Addressing needs of industry	**Not addressing needs of industry**
Operator level courses, flexible, varied and accessible (I4, I1, I3)	Enterprises not getting enough customisation (I3, I6)
Able to address enterprises' needs (I2, I4)	Problems with delivery to small and remote businesses (I3)
Separate courses for each industry sector (I5)	Courses being accessed by individuals with no other options (I6)
Catering to school leavers and returnees (I6)	Teachers' technical expertise is lacking (I1)
Meeting needs well (I7)	Workplace-based provision; secondary to productivity (I2, I3)
	Non-completion of food certificate (I2)
	Non-alignment between VET and industry (I5)
	Most courses are pre-vocational; limited up-skilling options (I6)
Addressing needs of enterprises	**Not addressing needs of enterprises**
Basic skills learnt at TAFE (E1, E8, E10)	Adapting to enterprise needs varied in success (E2, E3)
Content adapted to enterprise needs (E2, E8)	Intense short courses may suit enterprise more than learners (E6)
Up-skilling opportunities with enterprise and individuals' contributing (E3)	Beyond technical needs; other skills need addressing (customer relations) (E1, E10)
TAFE flexible with provisions (E3, E6, E9)	Not enough customisation to enterprise needs (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5)
Useful integration of off- and on-job components (E4)	Approaches to instruction not addressing needs of learners (E2, E3)
Useful collaboration with TAFE (E5)	Inconsistency across TAFE provision (E4)
Courses provide theoretical grounding (E5, E6, E8)	Insufficient integration between on- and off-job components (E6)
Tailored to meet the needs of the organisation (E5, E8)	Lack of genuine options for training (E6)
Strong focus on learning (E5)	
Job provision most important because of specificity of tasks (E7, E9)	

Addressing needs of enterprises cont.
Adequate provision (E8)
Accredited nationally and portable (E8, E9)
TAFE excellent (E10, E9)

Not addressing needs of enterprises cont.
Off-job component not valued (E6)
Unavailability of specific provisions (E8)
Too many providers dilute quality (E9)
Teachers may not be familiar with area of work (E10)

Addressing needs of region
Well served by educational institutions (C1, C2, C3, C5, C6)
TAFE has become very flexible and accommodating (C1, C2, C5, C6)
Some courses especially prepared for migrants (C3)
Learning support unit at TAFE (C3)
Positive feedback on TAFE by job applicants (C6)
Overall the quality of courses good (C4)

Not addressing needs of region
Geographical distribution of students makes access difficult (C1, C3, C4 C7)
Problems with encouraging small business to participate in training (C2)
Teachers not always available to give migrants the required level of support, hence high dropout rate (C3)
TAFE not aware of enterprise needs (C7)
Competition policy is seeing local needs subordinated to those of big companies and overseas ventures (C2)
Some TAFE teachers not addressing enterprises' needs (C4)
Problems caused by border situation (dual legislation, etc.) (C1, C4, C5)
Not enough employers taking on apprentices (C6)

Addressing needs of individuals
Access to courses in the workplace (FG1, FG5, FG6)
Certification (FG1, FG5)
Electives relate to work activities (FG1)
Group learning supported and supportive (FG1, FG6)
Hours and patterns of attendance (FG2, FG3)
Options available (FG3)
Transferable skills (FG4)
Improves confidence and skills (FG4)
Self-pacing useful (FG6)
Negotiated learning arrangements (FG6)
Integration with workplace activities (FG5, FG6)

Not addressing needs of individuals
Organising work placements caused concern (FG3)
Level of study not always appropriate (FG1)
Pretest/appraisal of skills might save wasted effort (FG1)
Distance provisions inhibit needed interaction with teachers (FG1)
Some modules inappropriate without interaction (FG1)
Distance to travel to college (FG2)
Longer periods of preparation for basic skills (FG2)
Practical preparation more thorough (FG2)
Cost of courses prohibitive (FG3)
Content repeated; not integrated into work activities (FG4)
Uneven access in workplace (FG4)
Reliance on others in team-based projects (FG6)
Amount of personal time required to study (FG5, FG6)
Trainers' lack of appreciation of shift work problematic (FG6)
Initial unavailability of modules (FG5)
Materials not well prepared or ready when students needed them (FG6)

Industry

Industry informants emphasised the way that the current provisions are being offered to meet enterprise needs through flexibility of access. In particular, strands in the food processing provisions permit relevance in course provisions. In the clerical sector, the provisions address the needs of school leavers and older workers returning to work.

Current VET provisions failed to meet industry needs, it was stated, through inadequate enterprise customisation, and the difficulty of addressing small and

remote businesses. One informant questioned teachers' technical expertise. There were also concerns from the clerical sector about the emphasis on pre-vocational rather than more advanced courses, and the belief that many students were accessing these courses out of a lack of choice. Concerns included the priority given to learning in workplace-based provisions, and the high incidence of non-completion of the Certificate of Food Processing, because enterprises only sponsored those modules they thought essential.

So, in all, the industry representatives proposed how individuals and enterprise needs were being addressed effectively. Concerns about structures of courses (an industry responsibility), and the inadequacy of work-based provisions in addressing individuals' as well as enterprise needs, were also advanced and supported. Again, more customisation was called for, and solutions to provisions for enterprises that are small and/or remote.

Enterprises

Enterprise representatives acknowledged the role of TAFE in entry-level training, and the way that enterprise needs had been accommodated within customised curricula. The flexibility of TAFE was acknowledged, as was the value of collaboration between enterprises and TAFE. In addition, respondents asserted the value of both on- and off-job experiences. The excellence of the TAFE provision and the ability of TAFE teachers to set up training systems in workplaces were stated by two enterprises. Overall, the adequacy of the dual responsibilities and provisions, and the certification that was forthcoming, were proposed as addressing both enterprise needs and those of the individuals who undertook the courses.

Conversely, informants held that enterprise customisation had not yet gone far enough, and was of mixed success. Equally, concerns about the degree of integration between on- and off-job provisions were proposed. As with industry respondents, there were concerns about provisions focused on the workplace. These concerns were about the adequacy of distance modes of learning, teachers' knowledge, and inconsistency across TAFEs. However, one enterprise doubted whether employees' needs were best addressed by short enterprise-focused courses. In addition, there were concerns about the widening field of providers, opportunities for genuine learning, and whether the best methods for learning were being adopted. Much concern focused upon inadequacies in the provision of VET tailored to the needs of enterprises and its employees. The most common shortcoming was the degree of customisation or tailoring that enterprises believed should occur. Interestingly, some of the shortcomings reported from enterprises seemed to be fuelled by concerns about a publicly funded provider; others seemed predisposed to be dismissive of TAFE, or have conflicting concerns. In situations where the impression was of a genuine effort at working together, there was strong support and respect. Essentially, criticism of TAFE provisions was not always supportable by the evidence proffered.

Overall, some enterprises were satisfied with the provisions, whereas others were not. It seems that the dissatisfaction was over degree, rather than the ability and willingness of current VET provisions to address enterprise needs.

Interestingly, each of the enterprises demanding more customisation had at one point praised the flexibility, existing customisation and adequacy of the current provisions; this usually referred to courses provided by TAFE, albeit through facilitated processes of support and distance provisions.

Regions

The informants for the region expressed satisfaction with the educational provisions and the flexible approach adopted by TAFE in addressing local needs. This included particular needs, such as those of migrants. The view from these informants was that the needs of the enterprises and individuals of the region were being well catered for.

Concerns raised by these community informants were associated with resourcing, to make VET provisions accessible to remote students and those with special needs, and the possible diversion of resources into large companies or overseas ventures. An informant with an interest in an alternative provision proposed that TAFE was not aware of enterprise needs. However, overall, more concerns were directed at enterprises and their lack of participation in VET.

So, many of the concerns of the region did not question the adequacy of the existing VET provision. Instead, they related to resourcing, the willingness of enterprises to participate, and the impact of competition policy on the region, as much as criticisms of the adequacy of TAFE or its teachers.

Individuals

Student informants in the focus groups provided data about the quality of provisions (access, flexibility, attendance patterns, options, integration of experiences) and outcomes (transferable skills, confidence and skills, certification). Tables A1.16, A1.17 and A1.18 provide data from the survey of past, present and current students engaged in food processing and clerical studies. The format for each table is the same. In the left-hand column is the item the students volunteered, and across the three right-hand columns are the frequencies with which students referred to these items. Table A1.15 aggregates the responses to how the teaching and learning arrangements addressed the students' needs. Tables A1.16 and A1.17 respectively refer to how the teaching and learning arrangements did not address their needs, and how the course failed to address their work goals. These data are used to augment the data from the focus groups provided in table A1.15.

Table A1.16: Appropriateness of teaching and learning (T/L) arrangements

Item	Past	Current	Prospective
Self-paced	3	4	
In line with expectations	4		
Appropriate level	1		
Good teacher support	1		
Convenient		42	51
Class size		1	

Table A1.17: How teaching and learning arrangements had not addressed needs

Item	Past	Current	Prospective
None	8	28	41
Not enough attention from teacher	5	2	1
Not enough time	2	3	5
Schedule/timetabling	1	5	
Motivation	1	2	1
Relevance	3	9	
Total	**20**	**57**	**48**

Table A1.18: How course fails to address work goals and location

Item	Past	Current	Prospective
Doesn't fail	11	26	30
Relevance		5	2
Lacked relevance to workplace	10		
Level too basic			2
Total	**21**	**31**	**34**

Students valued the access to workplace practice organised through TAFE, the certification, and the transferability of knowledge they learnt in the college provision. The self-paced approach was seen to address their needs (supported by current and prospective students in the survey). The most commonly proposed response from the on-campus respondents was the convenience of the mode of study. This referred to the flexibility in timetabling to address the needs of the students (e.g. family and work commitments). Students in the focus groups emphasised how much effort the teachers went to in order to be flexible about student demands. They reported teachers making themselves and facilities available prior to the morning's start, so that students could gain additional practice on basic skills. Links between on- and off-job components featured strongly in the students' perceptions of the current provisions.

Dissatisfaction with provisions can be delineated into workplace-based provisions and campus provisions. Concerns about the former include the level of initial work, the need to pre-test to give credit for existing learning, the difficulties with distance provisions, the preparedness and completeness of materials, reliance upon others, the amount of time required, and problems imposed by shift work. Concerns from campus-based students were associated with the need for longer periods of preparation and reinforcement of basic skills, the relevance of some material, and accessing teacher time. Of these, the concerns by current students about relevance is most noteworthy. Significantly, in both tables A1.17 and A1.18, when asked how the arrangements had failed to address their needs, the students responded uniformly and with the highest frequencies that the provisions had not failed to address their needs.

So, the needs of enterprises and individuals are being met, albeit in different ways. Enterprise needs were met through the tailoring of provisions, and being responsive. Although there is some dissent from this view, it is one of degree,

with all enterprises expressing support for the provisions they have been able to access. Students have, in a number of ways, expressed overall satisfaction in their provisions. Many of the concerns of industry are about the erosion of national prescription, and the lack of quality control through a market-based approach. The view from industry is that the purchasers (enterprises) may not be informed, and drawn to make decisions on a cost-only basis. With the erosion of 'front-end' regulatory arrangements which providers had to submit themselves to, there is concern that this deregulation will lead to a dilution of standards of instruction and assessment, as well as the erosion of national training provisions which have been the product of exhaustive consultation. Small businesses remain a problem, even more so when they are remote. They are usually least well placed to address their own needs, and not in a strong position to negotiate with providers. So there is a dichotomy between small and large enterprises in terms of training provisions that rely on market-based provisions.

The community appears to be divided into those who believe the market-based approach is the one most likely to secure regional goals, and those who have concerns for interests not well addressed by the market. The former view was aligned to the needs of enterprises, seeing regional development closely aligned to that of its enterprises (usually large enterprises). The second group was concerned about a broader set of interests. An issue for this latter group was that the local institute was focused far more upon internationalisation of its programs than local goals, and upon larger rather than smaller enterprises.

So, what arrangements are in place for planning? In the next section, current regional planning is identified and discussed.

Regional planning

The informants from all groups were asked how planning for VET was addressing the needs of enterprises, individuals and regions. The responses were not plentiful, although different perspectives emerged from the data. Table A1.19 presents this data under headings that categorise the responses from the informants by client group. Three themes emerge:

1 The idea that market-based approaches have removed the need for planning. It was held that direct consultation with enterprises and the development of enterprise-based provisions had removed the need for planning.
2 Planning was not occurring. This view was supported by the concern that the competitive environment inhibits the prospect for collaborative planning, as the providers—who possess much of the important knowledge about VET—are in competition with each other. Moreover, individuals representing the student perspective are not represented on planning forums. Equally, it is claimed that the industry advisory boards are not representative of enterprises.
3 Planning is occurring informally, and has potential to go further, through TAFE and regional planning agencies.

Arising from these views are concerns that enterprise needs are being addressed through the marketplace, thereby obviating the need for planning. Such a view posits enterprise needs as being the only ones worthy of consideration. In addition, the idea that market provisions remove the need for planning fails to address important strategic goals for vocational education. For example, one community respondent (C1) noted that local enterprises are aware that the downturn in apprentice numbers will likely see a shortage of skilled labour in the not-too-distant future. However, this situation has not encouraged these enterprises to employ additional apprentices. Rather, they believe that government will do something as this event occurs. Interestingly, in this region there is little movement in the mature population. It is claimed that the most mobile parts of the population are public servants and army workers who rotate through the region (C5). Consequently, investment in an apprentice here would seem to be a reasonably safe proposition.

Table A1.19: Planning at a regional level

Region
Planning not occurring (I1, C1, C3)
Being addressed through enterprise consultation (I5)
Regional consultation agencies (C1, C5)
TAFE's informal links (C2, C5, C6)
Competitive environment inhibits planning at local level (C4)
Schools' regional management committee (C7)
Enterprises
Planning replaced by enterprise-specific training provisions (I3)
Individuals
Individuals not involved (e.g. if they cannot get a job they cannot get trained) (I2, I5)
Industry
ITABs not representative: enterprises do not get a look-in (I4, I6)

So it seems that existing planning is largely informal, and that concerns of enterprises and individuals are not being considered. The needs of enterprises (large) are held to be through the market rather than planning.

Lifelong learning

The concept of lifelong learning has recently become part of government policy rhetoric. Lifelong learning used to be associated with individuals' personal development throughout their life. Now it has come to mean individuals' need to maintain the currency of their skills throughout their life, preferably at their own expense (Billett et al. 1997). Such a shift in the conceptualisation of this term captures the kinds of transformations taking place in public policy in Western countries. Here, it is useful to determine the degree to which the view about lifelong learning has been transformed, and to gauge the ways available provisions permit individuals to maintain currency and progression. Consequently, subjects representing enterprise, industry and community perspectives were first asked what they thought the term meant. Then they were asked how this provision was being addressed in current VET provisions.

As with views about planning, the data here depict the views of the client groups that have had and, seemingly, are likely to have great influence over VET provisions in the future.

Three interpretations emerged from analysis of the responses. Firstly, the view that lifelong learning referred to 'Meeting ongoing skill development needs' and the 'Ability to meet changing goals' was supported by enterprise and industry respondents. Second, the view that 'Individuals learn throughout their lives anyway' was proposed by industry, enterprise and community representatives. Third, community representatives proposed continual training and upgrading of qualifications. So, it was the enterprise and industry respondents who proposed the economic viewpoint as an outcome of and goal for lifelong learning. Community representatives, as well as enterprises and industry, advanced learning as a continual process.

Table A1.20: Meaning of lifelong learning

Meaning
Continuous learning for individual: We learn all the time (I4, I5, E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E7, E9, E10, C3, C5)
Meeting ongoing skill development needs (I1, I6, I7, E5, E6, E9)
Part of ongoing change process everyday life (I3, E4, E8, C7)
Ability to meet changing goals: keeping up (E7, E8, E9)
Continual training/upgrading qualifications (C1, C4, C5)
Learning to learn (I2, E9)
Monitoring own learning (I2)

Table A1.21: How lifelong learning is being addressed

Method
Formalised structures (courses, qualifications, AQF) (I3, I4, I7, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, C2, C5, C6)
Provision of opportunities (E1, E2, E4, E3, E5, E6, E8, E9)
Individual responsibility (E4, E6, E7, E9, E10, C4)
Combination of formal and informal learning is best (I3, I5, I7)
Formalised structure does not reflect career progression (I6, C1, C6)
Provisions not always available (C1, C3, C7)
Mandatory appraisal/in-service processes (E1, E4)
Access to modules (not certificates) (I4, I5)
Personal development (E2)
Self-directed learning (E7)
Own expense (E10)
Through RPL (I1)
Not addressing how to learn (I2)
Developing a training culture (I7)

Table A1.21 presents collated summaries of the data from the respondents about the measures in place for skills maintenance and development to occur through individuals' lives. These responses can be categorised into *provisions*, *values* and *concerns*.

Provisions

The existence of formal educational structures was proposed strongly by representatives of all three groups. Added to this were the suggested strategies

of recognition of prior learning (RPL), self-directed learning, combinations of on- and off-job provisions, mandated enterprise-based processes, and the development of training cultures within enterprises. These means were supported by all three groups of informants. At its extreme, this view linked these provisions to progress within enterprises:

> *Linking performance appraisal with training and development—structured processes to determine and rectify personal and organisational deficiencies.* (E1)

Values

The values underpinning how lifelong provisions should be realised are of three kinds. They are: (i) the provision of opportunities, (ii) individuals' responsibilities, (iii) to be undertaken at the individuals' own expense. These values are, with one exception, those proposed by enterprises. Even the response for personal development was furnished with an interest to develop the interpersonal skills required for the workplace.

Concerns

The concerns expressed by respondents referred to the inability of formal structures (qualifications and formalised courses) to reflect individuals' career progression, a lack of emphasis on 'learning to learn' skills, provisions not being available, and a concern that access to modules rather than complete courses was happening. These concerns were advanced by community and industry informants. The last two concerns relate particularly to the food processing sector, where the availability of modules is at the employer's discretion. Those modules deemed not to be required by the enterprise are not always available to employees. This situation has led to a concern about the low numbers of individuals actually completing the Certificate of Food Processing, compared with those who have completed modules. The concern here is that an enterprise-focused approach may inhibit, or make impossible, access to ongoing opportunities for advancement. If employment is a requirement to progress in courses, there will inevitably be inequities and barriers to individuals' progression.

The issues of the failure of the formal provisions to address career path needs is noteworthy. One of the community respondents stated that these arrangements did not address the needs of the individuals' career paths:

> *It doesn't—people don't do it that way. They branch out into other areas, and training for this is not available.* (C6)

The data presented above, and discussions about the findings, have indicated different patterns in the way that current VET provisions are addressing the needs of the client groups. Strong support from graduates about the quality of TAFE provisions is reflected in the views of some enterprise, community, industry and student informants. It is clear that there is an orthodoxy emerging which is focused on enterprise-specific arrangements. Even a community representative with an interest in provisions for migrants framed responses in

terms of enterprise and economic utility. It seems that only when VET provisions for migrants addressed enterprise needs as well were they wholly legitimate.

However, concerns about this shift were evident in the way planning for VET should best progress, how teachers' roles should be thought about, and provisions for the ongoing career progression of individuals within the region.

Having presented data, and discussed the current situation, the next section addresses views about what should be. That is, views concerning the aspirations and needs of all four groups.

Section 4: 'What should be'

Data were gathered in order to advance a view about how each of the client groups' needs, interests and aspirations can best be addressed. From this, an attempt will be made in the report to provide a pathway between what currently occurs and what should happen to address each client group's needs in a changing environment within vocational education. From the heading above entitled Changing relationships, it is evident that a shift is occurring, or has occurred, towards an enterprise-focused approach to vocational education. This is probably more so in the food processing sector, which has more direct links between enterprises and providers than in the clerical sector. However, if the practice in the former sector is illustrative of likely changes in the future, it is important to consider how best other needs can be addressed. As has been shown in the previous section, many of the changes to an enterprise-based approach are premised upon moves to impose market principles and practices into vocational education. Constraints brought about by a vocational education system that is seeking to manage shifts in its funding base, and to rely more heavily upon the contributions of enterprises and individuals, are allied to this move. As has been foreshadowed above, there is an orthodoxy that is developing to accommodate these changes. However, unless the strategic needs of each industry, the developmental needs of regions and individuals' aspirations are addressed—as well as those of enterprises—then it is unlikely that the VET system will adequately fulfil its role within the community.

Therefore, it is important to determine what each of the four client groups wants from the VET system. In order to be informed about these wants, the informants were asked to identify their needs and their aspirations in the form of ideals and views about what constitutes a quality VET provision. In addition, enterprise informants were asked about what it means to be an expert in their workplace, in order to determine the goals for vocational education programs, how best they should negotiate curriculum and engage in partnerships with providers, and what would encourage them to invest more in VET. The following section presents and discusses the responses to these questions.

Reasons for doing courses

Data on what individuals want from courses were sought from students. Two sources are referred to here: those from the graduate destination survey, and

surveys of past, current and prospective students in either food processing or clerical studies. Table A1.22 reports data from the GDS, whereas tables A1.23 and A1.24 report the students' aggregated responses to questions about their reasons for doing the course and what influenced them to do the course. This was undertaken to understand what they want from these provisions.

Differences in the reasons that graduates undertook courses were evident between the two institutes, as depicted in table A1.22. The key differences reside in percentages associated with those at PCIT#1 wishing to gain extra skills, advance to a better job or promotion, with a lower emphasis on personal development. When this is considered alongside the data showing that the mean ages for the PCIT#1 cohort are higher than PCIT#2 (34 years versus 30 years, respectively), it seems that differences in the employment status between the two institutes is most likely with older students engaging in part-time study associated with career progression and advancement. However, graduates' goals for undertaking the course were not just to get a job, but to advance within work. Hence, rather than gaining employment, the reason to undertake study was career related. Therefore, when considering individuals' needs, they must go beyond just employment and look towards career progression.

Table A1.22: Reasons for doing course

Reasons	PCIT#1	PCIT#2
To get a job (or own business)	21%	24%
To get extra skills for my job	20%	14%
To get a better job or promotion	16%	9%
To try for a different career	16%	10%
Interest or personal development	14%	23%
Requirement of job	9%	12%
Get into another course of study	2%	4%

Source: Graduate destination survey (PCIT#1 and PCIT#2).

Table A1.23: Reasons for enrolling in course

Reasons		
School leaver	30	(19%)
Upgrade skills	88	(54%)
Returnee	19	(12%)
Unemployed	24	(15%)
Total	**161**	

Table A1.24: What influenced students to do course

Reasons		
Needed a job	32	(20%)
Work skills	51	(32%)
Knowledge of industry	15	(9%)
Qualification	3	(2%)
Upgrade skills	31	(20%)
Required for job	21	(13%)
Other	6	(4%)
Total	**159**	

The pattern evident in table A1.22 is repeated in table A1.23, with 54 per cent of the students seeking to upgrade their skills, and 12 per cent of returnees also wishing to extend their knowledge. Equally, in table A1.24, the need for up-skilling represents over half of the responses. So, when considering what individuals want from VET provisions, and how these needs are addressed or transformed by other client groups, it is important to recognise that individuals engage in VET for reasons other than merely gaining employment. Rather, they seek other goals such as advancements and career paths. Provisions that fail to address these requirements are not addressing individuals' needs. This view is advanced further below.

Needs of client groups

Summary statements from the data on the needs and aspirations of each client group are aggregated in table A1.25. The data here are derived from respondents identifying (i) their needs, and (ii) what should be done to address the needs of client groups. The second question was asked only of community and industry respondents, as other items, presented below, address the needs of enterprises. Informants were also asked what they think constitutes a quality provision of VET. In table A1.25, summary statements from the questions are presented by client groups. As in earlier tables, the respondents advancing or supporting these propositions are indicated in parentheses. To gain some basis for comparison across the client groups, the responses have been delineated into those referring to 'processes' and those referring to 'outcomes'.

Table A1.25: Needs of client groups

Industry—*Processes*	*Outcomes*
Training that is accessible, flexible and current (I4, I6, I7)	Skilled workers at operator level (I1, I3, I5, I7)
Competence of staff (including specific knowledge) (I4, I7)	Flexible and self-directed workforce (e.g. initiative) (I1, I2, I4, I5)
Infrastructure to support quality delivery (I7)	Safe and productive workforce (I7)
More flexibility than offered by training packages (I1)	Greater participation by small business (I3)
External auditing of training to make it less enterprise specific (I2)	More holistic curriculum (I3)
Reduce national input (I4)	Certification for workers (I2, I3, I5)
Enterprise to negotiate with local providers (I4)	Career pathways for industry workers (I3, I4, I5)
Decision-making by more knowledgeable people (I5)	Programs suiting both small and large businesses (I5, I6)
Have providers work in industry more (I6)	Accredited course resulting from industry consultation (I1, I3)
ITABs identify needs (I7)	Currency and relevance of course content (I1, I3, I5, I6)
Reliable assessment (I2)	Relevance, applicability and cost-effective course provision (I3, I4, I6)
Enterprises—*Processes*	*Outcomes*
Continued access to flexible TAFE provision (E1, E3)	Specific, job-ready technical skills (E1, E5, E6, E8)
Greater adaptation to enterprise and individual needs (E2, E5, E7)	Development of attitude (e.g. work ethic) (E2)
Review and assessment procedures (E6)	Basic personal and organisation skills (E2, E3, E4, E5, E6)
Locally-based provisions (E7)	Enterprise-specific understandings (E3, E8)
More competition between providers (E8)	Understanding of overall goals (E9)
More involvement with and capacity to training at enterprise level (E8)	More thorough grounding in basics (E10)
Interests and motivates staff (E9)	Accredited course resulting from industry consultation (E6)
Positive and supportive teachers (E2)	

Enterprises—*Processes* (cont.)	*Outcomes* (cont.)
Competence of staff (including specific knowledge) (E7)	Currency and relevance of course content (E1, E2, E4, E5)
Addressing individuals' learning needs (E1, E2, E4, E5, E7)	Relevance, applicability and cost effective course provision (E3, E4, E7, E9)
Content well prepared and presented (E3, E7)	Improve business outcomes (E5)
	Measurable outcomes (E6, E10)
Individuals—*Processes*	*Outcomes*
Positive and supportive teachers (FG1, FG5, FG6)	Update skills or learn new things (FG1, FG3, FG4, FG6)
Flexibility in provisions (FG5, FG6)	Certification (FG1)
Infrastructure to support quality delivery (FG5)	Pathway to higher levels of certification/promotion (FG1, FG4, FG6)
Addressing individuals' learning needs (FG2, FG6)	Prepare for self-employment (FG1)
Content well prepared and presented (FG1, FG2)	Employment (FG3, FG4)
	Career (FG3, FG4)
	Realise personal goals (FG3, FG4, FG6)
	Relevance, applicability and cost-effective course provision (FG1, FG6)
	Supports career (FG3, FG6)
Community—*Process*	*Outcomes*
Consult with community groups (C3)	Enhance small business interest in training (C1)
More individual interaction with teachers (C3)	Enterprises to sponsor more entry-level training (looming skills crisis) (C4)
Greater interaction among stakeholders (C5)	Accredited course resulting from industry consultation (C4)
Providers responsive to local needs (C6)	Currency and relevance of course content (C5, C6)
Maintain links with national curriculum (C7)	Relevance, applicability and cost-effective course provision (C2, C3, C5, C6)
Interests and motivates staff (C7)	Improve business outcomes (C5)
Competence of staff (including specific knowledge) (C6)	Measurable outcomes (C2)
Addressing individuals' learning needs (C5, C6, C7)	Leads to employment (C1, C5)
	Supports career (C3, C5)
	Adds value to enterprise (C4)
	Personal development of learners (C7)

Table A1.26 presents the data gathered through the survey of past, current and prospective students. In the left-hand column are the qualities identified by the respondents. The right-hand columns provide a frequency count of the respondents' identification of this quality.

Table A1.26: Desirable qualities of a VET course

	Past	Current	Prospective
Good teachers		8	12
Practical skills for the job	14	10	16
Good resources	1	9	7
Choice/flexibility		2	3
Accreditation	2		
Interesting		3	2

Industry

Industry needs, in terms of processes, were associated with the currency of and flexibility in VET provisions, the competence of the teaching staff, and the infrastructure to provide quality delivery. Flexibility refers to *access*—addressing the requirements of both small and large enterprises—and *negotiation*, input and decision-making occurring at the local rather than the national level. However, in response to this local decision-making and negotiation, it was suggested that ITABs still identify needs for the industry, and that flexibility at the local level be managed through the use of external auditing to assist with maintenance of national standards and certification. This sentiment is also reflected in the call for reliability of assessment.

The outcomes desired by industry representatives are, at the enterprise level, for skilled workers whose attributes include being flexible, safe, self-directed and productive. VET provisions supporting this need to be relevant and applicable. At the industry level, accredited, current and relevant courses which are the product of industry consultation, improved participation by small businesses, and career paths and certification for industry workers.

Enterprises

Enterprise concerns about processes were related solely to provision of courses. Access to flexible local provisions, either through TAFE or through developing the capacity within enterprises themselves, were identified as key needs. These provisions are (i) to focus tightly on enterprise needs, (ii) be presented by competent, positive and supportive teachers, and (iii) be able to address individuals' needs as well as interesting and motivating staff. It is also claimed that a competitive market should be in place to secure best value and quality in these provisions. In addition, the capacity to assess employees' progress and to evaluate the utility of the programs is also required.

The outcomes required for enterprises are job-ready skills which have technical, attitudinal, personal and organisational dimensions. These outcomes need to be linked intimately to the specific tasks as well as to the overall goals of the enterprises in terms of improved measurable business outcomes. The courses should be accredited, and be the result of consultation with industry. As such, currency and relevance to the enterprise coalesce with industry standards.

Individuals

Individuals wanted quality flexible VET provisions, supported by appropriate infrastructure. These provisions are to comprise well-prepared content—presented by competent, positive and supportive teachers—and are able to address individuals' needs. However, the data from the students surveys, presented in table A1.26, indicate that practical skills for the job and good teachers were qualities most desired by the students.

Outcomes were mainly employment-related. However, more than just gaining employment, they focused on progression, careers and self-employment.

Consequently, the course outcomes need to be relevant and applicable. So, more than just employment, these outcomes are about progression within and across enterprises and self-employment. Pathways to higher positions and the attainments of personal goals reinforce this focus. To reinforce this point, the following described the backgrounds and goals from participants in one of the focus groups. These are five prospective students for clerical courses who were asked what they wanted from the course:

1 A good job, which is not in a factory, and pays well so I can buy a house.
2 Partner wants to retire from train driving in five years' time and drive trucks. She wants to be the bookkeeper for this business.
3 Has been in catering for the last ten years but was made redundant last year. She enjoyed some short computer courses, and decided to work her way up the ladder.
4 Daughter is in now in high school and will need to know how to use a computer. It is important that she can show her because her daughter has a learning disability.
5 Completed a course last year—Certificate in General Education—for adults, and decided she wanted to do another course. She is new to the region and hopes to meet people and get some work in office administration, even as a volunteer. She has not been in the workforce for 20 years, and wants to bring herself up to current standards and get over her fear of computers.

These prospective students bring with them goals that are career-related, strategic and responding to personal and family needs.

Community

The process aims of the community consistently focus upon consultations and interactions, among all client groups and between these groups and providers. Specifically, it was held that the provisions would need to be to address individuals' needs, and interest and motivate the individuals undertaking these courses. The competence of teaching staff was held to be important. In addition, the need for maintenance of national curriculum to assist with certification and portability was acknowledged.

The desired outcomes comprised higher levels of sponsorship of training by small business and enhanced participation in apprenticeship-type arrangements by local enterprises. Associated with this were demands that the courses be relevant and applicable, and addressed the development of learners, not only in gaining employment but in the pursuit of careers. Balancing concerns between individuals and enterprises, the community respondents also emphasised the need for VET provisions to add value to the enterprise, and improve business outcomes in a way that is measurable. Hence, courses are required to be accredited—the result of consultation with business—and also to be current, relevant and applicable to local enterprises.

The industry responses are indicative of their concerns about securing a balance between enterprise needs and the requirements of the industry as a whole,

which includes those who work within it. The rigidities they suggest are focused upon maintaining a national presence, and these may well be criticised by others for attempting to maintain their role. However, more importantly, these measures emphasise the need for structures within an environment that is rapidly becoming deregulated and market-driven. There is often commonality between the concerns of communities and those of industry representatives. The need to maintain activities in the longer term, more broadly based than those found within enterprises, are furnished here. Yet there is, at the same time, acknowledgement of the central role that enterprises play in the health of the community, and that industry would not exist without enterprises. Moreover, there is a common view that enterprises are required to accept responsibilities as well as enjoying the benefits of the emerging focus within VET. Concerns about the quantum and quality of participation are common. The number of opportunities furnished by enterprises is held to be disappointing, as is the number of individuals able to graduate from programs in which individual enterprises are sponsoring and selecting the material to be undertaken.

Conceptions of expertise

In order to determine the kinds of learning outcomes required for performance in enterprises, representatives were asked to state what it meant to be an expert in their workplace. The purpose behind this question was that if it is possible to identify what is required of expertise, then the requirements of VET provisions for enterprises can be gauged more closely. The responses have been summarised, and are represented in the format adopted throughout this case study, in table A1.27.

Table A1.27: Expertise from an enterprise perspective

Expertise
Multi-skilled—multi-functional (E1, E3, E4, E6, E10)
Skilled in specific 'technical' tasks (E1, E2, E5, E7, E8, E10)
Interpersonally and organisationally skilled (E1, E2, E5, E7, E10)
Pride in product (E2)
Predicting and fixing up problems (E3, E5, E6, E8, E9)
Being sought out by others (E4)
Acceptance of change (E4, E6)
Productive (E5)
Understanding processes and product (monitoring) (E5, E8)
Working co-operatively (E5, E7)
Passing on skills (E5, E7)

The attributes summarised here can be categorised in terms of (i) knowledge types, (ii) dispositions and (iii) peer recognition.

Knowledge types

The requirements to be specifically skilled and multi-skilled—to be able to monitor and respond to problems—demand that workers have rich knowledge bases associated with their vocational activities, comprising propositional and procedural knowledge at both specific and higher order levels. This knowledge

permits not only specific tasks to be undertaken in the workplace, but also allows workers to apply their knowledge across the workplace in different situations and circumstances. For example, being broadly skilled is likely to require a wide range of specific knowledge which comes from extended practice in these areas of work. However, to be able to monitor, predict and have a rich understanding of work practice requires deeper forms of propositional knowledge and higher orders of procedures. These forms of knowledge require careful fostering.

Dispositions

Dispositional attributes—including pride in practice, working co-operatively, and accepting of change—are all identified as underpinning expert performance. Although required in different ways across different settings, these values are richly associated with the knowledge types. For instance, how something is conceptualised, considered worth doing a decent job upon, etc., emphasises the rich association between dispositions and the knowledge types identified above.

Peer recognition

Peer recognition is an indication of peers' perception of an individual's competence. In this case it has been stated that 'being sought out by others' is an acknowledgement of competence. Such acknowledgement is likely to arise from the individual's possession of the two kinds of attributes outlined above. It is these attributes that permit performance.

To develop the first two sets of attributes identified above takes time, practice, access to expertise or guidance, and potentially a structured approach to learning which is able to maximise the prospect of these knowledge types being secured. Combinations of on- and off-job types of VET provisions are likely to be able to secure these forms of knowledge. The on-job experiences provide access to a range of knowledge and guidance in the workplace which can assist the learners' construction of that knowledge. Alternatively, the classroom may be an effective place to secure understandings that are not apparent or accessible in the workplace. One confounding factor is that the goals for performance are likely to be situational and vary from workplace to workplace. However, it seems that it is difficult to learn broadly transferable knowledge in one setting (e.g. the college classroom) and expect that this knowledge will transfer. More likely, knowledge secured richly in one context needs to be abstracted from that context to another. This suggests that extensive experiences are required in one context, with assistance being provided in order for the learner to appreciate what is transferable to other circumstances and what level of transfer can reasonably be expected. The issue here is that the forms of knowledge required and identified by the enterprises, as stated above, will not be addressed by curriculum provisions that focus on content alone, nor behavioural outcome-focused measures of performance. If longer-term goals are to be realised for enterprises, individuals and industries and communities, it is important that,

wherever the vocational education provisions are enacted, they not be dominated by short-term concerns that obliterate the demanding and lifelong task of individuals developing the attributes required for their vocation.

In addition, the existing paradigm for curriculum in vocational education is not able to account for the types of knowledge and dispositions identified here. Consequently, different approaches are required that acknowledge the importance of the concepts and procedures identified above, and reflect the need to consider these in curriculum and assessment within VET. By focusing curriculum provisions at the workplace level, there is the opportunity to develop further understanding about what is situationally important and what knowledge is more broadly applicable. By being able to identify the variance of the situational factors that underpin expertise, it may well be possible to maximise transfer by indicating to learners the breadth of performance which comprise expertise, rather than one singular and supposedly objective view.

Enterprises' negotiation of curriculum and partnerships with providers

Enterprise informants were asked about how best they should negotiate curriculum with providers, and the sorts of qualities that would encourage them to enter into partnerships with providers. The motive for posing this question was to determine whether it is possible to reconcile a number of interests and needs through negotiated arrangements with providers such as TAFE, with these negotiations being founded upon a partnership between provider and enterprise. Such arrangements are held to underpin the maturity of vocational education provisions in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (OECD 1994a). Although there are quite different antecedent conditions in those countries, it is proposed that there is potential in establishing collaborative arrangements based upon mutuality of interests and respect, and that such arrangements can be used to address both the short- and long-term goals of enterprises, the industry, and individuals (Billett et al. 1997). Given that collaboration has been identified as something desirable by the community informants, this would seem to address regional needs as well.

Table A1.28 provides tabulated summaries of enterprise responses to these questions. In the left column are the summarised and aggregated responses to the issue of negotiations; in the right column are those associated with partnerships. The majority of enterprises supported the idea that local negotiations are feasible. Moreover, these are to be directly with providers such as TAFE. Dissenting views include those from an enterprise that was governed by centralised (head office) decision-making on matters associated with training. Another enterprise suggested that these decisions were likely to be associated with internal planning and purchasing, which may sit uneasily with negotiated arrangements.

Table A1.28: Enterprises' negotiations of curriculum and partnerships with providers

Negotiation of curriculum	Enterprise partnership
Local expert committees (E1)	Timely meeting of our needs (E1)
Individual negotiation with providers (TAFE) (small business preference) (E2, E3, E5, E7, E9)	Understanding our perspective/needs (E1, E2, E3, E6, E8)
Corporate negotiations (E4)	Understanding needs of provider and enterprise (E4, E5, E9)
Internal training planning and procurement (E8)	Maximising strengths within enterprise (E5, E8)

The idea of partnerships with enterprises was also seen as being useful if such arrangements (i) could provide timely training, (ii) be premised on an understanding of the enterprise needs, and (iii) maximised the contributions of the enterprise. Three enterprise respondents stressed mutuality of needs in such a partnership. That is, such an arrangement needs to build upon what can be done to maximise both partners' contribution. This includes an acknowledgement of inhibiting factors (e.g. constraints of shift work, constraints of tiny groups of learners).

So, the form of and prospects for partnerships between enterprises and providers is likely to differ across enterprises, with larger enterprises more likely to engage than smaller units. Equally, the two industries selected for this study offer quite different prospects of what is likely across industry sectors. Where you have large numbers of individuals working under the same roof engaged in similar activities, the prospects are more readily addressed than those in which the tasks performed by employees are quite different from each other.

Increasing investment in training

In order to understand how best to address the issue of the collapsing commitment by enterprises to VET throughout Australia, enterprise informants were asked what would encourage their enterprises to invest more in training. The responses in table A1.29 illustrate the values that currently influence the decision by enterprises to participate more in training. The most common response was associated with furnishing evidence that it would enhance productivity. Other responses were associated with external (legislative) changes or internal (restructuring) demands. Most of the large enterprises suggested that their current efforts addressed the skill development needs of the workforce, and that only the demands just outlined would encourage them to participate more. However, other enterprises at different stages of development did foreshadow that changes in production processes and technologies may pre-empt some changes. Yet there was little evidence of a conscious plan to skill for the future—that is, to develop further the skills of workers beyond immediate needs (with one possible exception). The data here seem to confirm other concerns about the role of enterprises in maintaining or developing the nation's workforce. These include the downturn in enterprise commitment to sponsoring apprenticeships, and their preference for short-term entry-level

training options such as traineeships. At this time, it seems that enterprise priorities are capricious and inward-focused, and cannot be relied upon alone to furnish the skill base of Australia.

Table A1.29: Factors that would encourage enterprises to invest more in VET

Factors
Organisational change/restructure (E1, E4)
Legislative changes (E1, E4, E5)
Knowing a productive outcome would result (E2, E3, E4, E5, E6)
Access and availability (E3)
Changes in technology (E5)
Convincing appraisal of needs and programs to address those needs (E7)
Growth in business (E8)
Developing skills further (E8)

Rural region

Introduction

This case study has been written as part of a project that seeks to understand and articulate the needs of the four key clients of vocational education and training (VET), and how these needs are reflected in existing and evolving VET policy and practice. The four client groups of VET are industry, community, enterprises and individuals (Billett et al. 1997). The project aims to understand how the needs of each client group can best be addressed at a time when the focus upon decision-making within VET is changing. The change is from an 'industry-led' system, which has dominated for the last decade, to an enterprise-focused system. The concern was to consider how best to reconcile the needs and aspirations of all four clients groups in the provisions and curriculum within VET.

The study took place in three Australian regions, selected to represent (1) a provincial centre, (2) a remote rural centre and (3) a major metropolitan centre.

The two industry sectors targeted to furnish data from the regions were the food processing and clerical industry sectors. The food processing sector represents one whose involvement within VET is growing, yet remains peripheral to the mainstream vocational education system. The clerical industry has long been the focus of vocational education provisions, which include formal offerings, institutional specialisation and core teaching activities.

The data-gathering focused on three areas of concern. Firstly, to determine the degree of change from an 'industry-led' provision of VET—with its focus on national uniformity, national core curriculum, and national recognition of skills—to an 'enterprise-focused' provision of VET. And, if so, to understand the likely consequences of such a change. Secondly, to determine how the current provision of vocational education in these regions addresses the needs of the four client groups. Thirdly, the project aimed to determine the needs and aspirations of each of the client groups and how they can best be reconciled in the provision of VET. It is held that maturity in a vocational education system is more likely to be realised by addressing mutuality in the needs and interests of all its client groups, rather than allowing domination by just one (Billett et al. 1997).

The data used to construct this case study were drawn from a number of sources.

Firstly, the data gathered for this project focused upon the three concerns just outlined. The data-gathering strategies comprised structured interviews and focus groups, with subjects representing the views of industry, community, enterprises and individuals. Industry representatives were from ITABs and TAFE curriculum sections who have responsibility for the 'industry-led' VET provisions in that sector. Essentially, these were spokespersons for government policy who advanced the bi-partite views of industry. Representatives from enterprises came from the food processing and clerical sectors. Community representatives were those who spoke on behalf of the regions. Individuals comprised prospective, current and past students who were both surveyed and participated in focus groups. The sampling and data-gathering did not seek to be exhaustive or wholly representative. Such a claim would be illusory. Rather, it elicited understandings and ideas from representatives of the two industries, enterprises within those industries, the local community, and individuals who were prospective, existing or past students in courses servicing those industries. The interviews of enterprise and community representatives, focus groups and surveys of students, were undertaken with individuals from the rural centre region. Industry representatives were those from State ITABs and TAFE curriculum officers who have responsibilities for the selected industry sectors.

In presenting the data in this case study, some conventions have been adopted. The respondents themselves remain anonymous. However, as it is important to identify which interests they represent, the responses are designated as community (C), industry (I), enterprise (E) and students (S). For students there is a further delineation into those who were part of a focus group (FG) and those who were the product of a survey (SU). Additional detail is provided about the standing of the informant(s) when appropriate. The data from the interviews and focus groups were transcribed and tabulated, and summaries of this qualitative data are presented in tables. The data from the surveys of prospective, current and past students are also presented in tables within the case study. The respondents to the rural centre survey were predominantly female (63 per cent), part-time students (56 per cent) and studying wholly at college (62 per cent); the most common age group was under 20 (34 per cent) and typically are or were enrolled in a certificate level course.

A second data set is comprised of existing statistical information on the area and students from the region. These comprise ABS data from the 1995 census, documents from local development agencies that draw upon their own surveys and specific ABS data, and the 1997 TAFE GDS. The ABS data were used to furnish demographic data about the region. The data from local development agencies were used to indicate measures of economic activity. The GDS survey was managed by NCVER on behalf of the Australian National Training Authority. This survey is used to present data about students who undertook studies at the rural centre institute of TAFE (RCIT). The graduate surveys, based at each institute, furnished demographic data on graduates, the industries they are likely to be employed in, reasons for attending the course, details of those courses, and a range of data on benefits and satisfaction outcomes. Although not specific to the two selected industry sectors, the data were useful in determining

how the current provisions are perceived to be addressing graduates needs. The samples were respectably large. However, two limitations of the survey data need to be stated. Firstly, not all graduates responded to the survey, so the data represent respondents only. Secondly, only graduates of courses with a duration of 200 hours were surveyed.

The third data source is comprised of documents provided by local development agencies. These documents furnished information about the region's economic activities and goals for economic development.

The case study is structured as follows:

- A brief overview of the region is provided.
- Data on the changing relationships of decision-making in VET are presented and discussed.
- Data depicting the current provisions of VET, and how they are perceived by the four client groups, are presented and discussed.
- Data on the ideals, aspirations and needs of the client groups are presented and discussed.

Section 1: An overview of the region

In addition to the local institute of TAFE (RCIT), other providers of vocational education are also located in this area. These include the local high school system—which has an active VET program—community and private providers. However, many young people have to leave the area to complete their education. Not all of them return, adding to concerns about an ageing population (over 40 per cent are between 55 and 64 years old) and a potential shortage of skilled industry workers in the future.

The region has a population of 27 047 (ABS 1996). The population of this region is predominately Australian-born. For instance, 94 per cent of the respondents to the graduate destination survey for RCIT (NCVER 1997) report Australia as their place of birth. Of the region's entire population, 1.0 per cent (1370) have Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) heritage (ABS 1996). Five per cent of the population (1370) were born in countries where English is not the spoken language (see table A2.1).

Table A2.1: Selected ABS data from the rural centre region

Population	27 047	(100%)
ATSI population (%)	271	(1.0%)
NESB population (%)	1370	(5.1%)
Median age	34	

Source: ABS 1996, selected characteristics.

The most commonly reported occupation in the rural centre area is wholesale and retail, which employs 25 per cent of the workforce, followed by manufacturing (22 per cent). However, forestry work is classified with manufacturing. Other industries employing in the rural centre area include

community service (17 per cent), sales and personal service (17 per cent), labourers and related work (16 per cent), and clerks (13 per cent) (sourced from 1997 data from a regional development board).

Having provided a brief sketch of the region, the next section presents and discusses data on changing relationships between industry and enterprises in decision-making about VET provisions and curriculum.

Section 2: Changing relationships

Changes towards an enterprise focus within VET

Subjects representing industry and enterprise perspectives were asked to furnish evidence of any change in the relationship between industry-based provisions of vocational education and those which represent enterprise-based provisions. Subsequently, the subjects were asked about the likely effects of such a shift. Table A2.2 provides aggregated summaries of the evidence from the industry and enterprise informants that such a shift is taking place. In the right column of this table, the client group is identified. In the left column, the evidence of a shift is presented, identifying those informants who furnished the evidence. The informants representing both industry and enterprises were in overall agreement that the focus for VET provisions were being directed towards individual enterprises.

Table A2.2: Shift to enterprise focus

Industry
On-the-job provisions (I1, I2)
Customisation of training; training packages (I1, I2)
Still retaining an industry influence (I1, I2)
Happening in different ways in different enterprises (e.g. small/large) (I3)
Enterprise
Negotiation of course content and outcomes (E1, E2, E5)
Ability to select modules to address needs (E5)
Concerns about the degree of tailoring occurring (E1)
Satisfaction with facilitated approach (E2)
On-the-job provision reflects shift (E6)
Assessment in the workplace (E6)

The industry informants proposed that the types of provisions which were being enacted currently, the customisation taking place or about to take place, and the views about variations in provisions—all of which have an enterprise focus—are evidence of this shift (see table A2.2). Enterprise informants referred to the quality of negotiations, the mechanisms which were permitting and inhibiting their needs to be accommodated, and the on-the-job training provisions. Together these factors indicate a shift, or attempts to address, enterprise needs in a more concerted way.

However, there were differences in terms of the two industry sectors. The stranding of the Certificate of Food Processing permits an initial addressing of sub-sectoral needs (viticulture, meat processing, etc.) which was not available in

the clerical industry sector. Also, the evidence of large enterprises negotiating with providers about courses for their enterprises was different in the two sectors.

In the food processing sector, the tailoring of sector-specific modules within the CFP was negotiated to fit the needs of the enterprises. In addition, the courses were offered on the job at the enterprises, in ways that suited their needs and those of their employees. The clerical 'industry' seems more problematic, because its definition as an industry does not hold. Rather, it is a service sector which addresses the needs of a range of industry sectors. There were diverse views about the degree to which, and at what level, there was commonality in clerical work. Large enterprises employing substantial numbers of clerical workers had requirements that they would address the needs of their enterprise through the application of particular skills, and becoming involved in the industry-specific activities (e.g. local government, public administration). However, the formal provision of courses was more standardised in this sector than in food processing, and more likely to be based in the educational institution.

Across the subjects that represented views of industry and enterprise, there was overall agreement that the focus for VET provisions was being directed towards individual enterprises. From the industry representatives, the evidence for this claim is in terms of the types of provisions being enacted currently, the customisation taking place or about to take place, and the views about variations in provisions (see table A2.2). Enterprise representatives spoke about the quality of negotiations, the mechanisms that are permitting and inhibiting their needs to be accommodated, and the on-the-job training provisions. There was no key discernible difference between the two industry sectors in terms of expectation and demands (discussed in detail below). However, the stranding of the food industry facilitated enterprise needs to be addressed, and offers the potential for this to be undertaken in ways that address both individuals' goals of certification and portability, and industry concerns with common standards.

Table A2.3 provides summarised statements of issues arising from the shift to an enterprise-focused provision of VET. Issues identified by industry and enterprise informants are shown in the left column. The industry informants' concerns were quite distinct from those of enterprises; the former focused upon concerns about the specific qualities of enterprise-based provisions, in terms of content and goals, and the consequential erosion of national curriculum goals, as well as problems for certification for employees. In addition, system concerns emerged, associated with short-termism in enterprise goals and the potential division of VET provisions into those which can be provided through the public system and those solely accessible within enterprises.

Table A2.3: Issues arising from enterprise focus

Industry
Eroding the portability of qualifications (I1)
Specificity of content and outcomes (parochial–customisation) (I1, I2)
Erosion of national curriculum goals (I1, I2)
Fragmentation of curriculum (I1, I2)
Short-termism of educational goals (I1)
Enterprise
Has to be enterprise driven (E1, E5)
More negotiation required (E1, E5)
Requires intimate knowledge of enterprise, structure, staff and goals (E1)

From the enterprise perspective, the most common concern was with securing a tighter enterprise focus. It held that the VET system had to be driven by enterprise needs, and that more negotiation was required to address these needs—requiring providers to develop an intimate knowledge of the enterprise, its goals and staff. However, one clerical employer recognised the need for a common base of portable skills. Concerns were raised by others that courses negotiated at the enterprise level had to carry nationally accepted recognition. The relationship between providers and enterprises was marked in other ways. The development of a capacity for enterprises to offer programs 'in-house' was seen as a role for providers, particularly TAFE. However, not all enterprises wished to become providers. They viewed this to be the role of providers such as TAFE, who had the appropriate expertise. In all, enterprises wished to have access to training expertise, albeit to tailor provisions to their needs either through enterprise-based or provider-furnished provisions, which addressed their specific workplace needs.

In sum, the informants confirmed that a shift had occurred, or was occurring, from VET provisions addressing industry needs to addressing those of enterprises. This was more directly prevalent in the food processing industry with its strands, employees and emerging demand for VET provisions. It should be noted that the majority of food processing courses are offered off-campus, whereas courses for the clerical sector are campus-based, and participants are less likely to be employees. Enterprises in the food industry have to directly fund their provision. Equally, the strands within the CFP necessitate consideration of particular needs of the enterprise in terms of fittedness with the generic and strand requirements of the course. This situation probably precipitates tailoring. As the courses for the clerical sector have long existed, and are largely offered through a college-based provision to individuals who are less likely to be employees, there appears to be less direct demand for tailoring. However, there is an expectation that these courses will also address the particular needs of the local enterprises.

Concerns arising from the shift to an enterprise focus were delineated by client groups. Industry informants were concerned about the erosion of national curriculum and certification, as well as the potential for VET provisions to become too enterprise-specific in terms of content and goals. Enterprises,

understandably, required courses to intimately address their needs, and to be customised accordingly. This position was most understandable when the course was funded by the enterprise. However, this was not always the case—particularly in the clerical sector. Yet it seems that enterprises can demand such customisation from providers in an increasingly competitive VET market, in ways which may or may not be mindful of industry concerns and goals. Enterprises want providers to develop a rich and intimate understanding of their needs and the readiness of staff, and tailor national prescription to these particular needs. However, it would seem that only the largest of enterprises would contemplate such interaction with multiple providers in a true market sense. In particular, it seems unlikely that providers will be able to offer rich analyses of small businesses' needs in a lean, market-based situation. There was, however, an expectation from small enterprises that their needs should be met. Emerging concerns for other client groups include the separation of courses into those that were publicly and privately funded, and those whose participants were likely to be employees or not employed. Such divisions will erode opportunities for those entering the workforce, engaging in entry-level training, and seeing employment and vocational preparation linked at a time of high unemployment.

For individuals, this shift means that workplace-based provisions may discriminate against those not in employment, whereas those in employment are more likely to only access provisions customised or selected for the particular workplace. What is proposed here, and in the next section, 'What is', is that enterprises want two levels of customisation:

1 The particular content and goals for the program need to address the requirements for vocational practice in the enterprise.
2 These activities are integrated with the particular organisational practice within the enterprise.

Such an outcome could be positive for individuals, where opportunities for advancement and career development exist—that is, where a specialism has the potential to address the aspiration and needs of individuals. However, alternatively, where such progression is not possible, these provisions may well inhibit the individuals' aspirations and potential. In addition, it was evident that enterprise-based provisions do not allow individuals to complete certification requirements, thereby inhibiting portability.

For the community, this shift may mean that enterprises have more tailored training provisions, which directly enhance their productivity. Equally, these provisions may provide access to educational provisions for workers who have never enjoyed such opportunities. Yet, concerns for communities include the long-term consequences of such enterprise-specific arrangements—particularly for those who are not employed—and for the ability of workers to deploy their vocational practice when they experience severance from their employer. So there are individual and community issues in these arrangements.

Addressing the needs of industry, enterprises, individuals and regions

A key concern underlying this study was that although the focus of VET provisions is changing, that change is from one set of interests (industry) to another (enterprises). However, mutuality of needs of all the key stakeholders (industry, enterprises, individuals, regions) is proposed as a means by which the full potential of VET can be realised, and maturity is to be found. However, issues about readiness, sectional interests, legislative imperatives, the particular requirements of enterprises and the difficulty with consultative processes, were used to detail the complexity of this task. The responses were diverse, but categorisable under three headings: (i) consultation, (ii) sectional interests, and (iii) co-ordination. Summaries of the data containing client perspectives of those identifying with the responses are depicted in table A2.4. In this table, factors that support the ideas under the heading are depicted in the left column and factors perceived likely to inhibit this approach to reconciling need are depicted in the right. The three approaches are discussed in the following sections.

Table A2.4: Perspectives on realising mutuality of need

Consultation—*factors supporting*	**Consultation**—*factors inhibiting*
Being consulted—involved in planning and development (I2, C1)	Adequate representation (I3)
Already happens (I2)	Loss of less powerful voices (I2)
Local planning important (I2)	Focus groups get swamped by large numbers of players (E3)
	Difficulties of collaboration in a market situation (E3, C1)
	Securing balance between educational and enterprise needs (E3)
Sectional interests—*factors supporting*	**Sectional interests**—*factors inhibiting*
Students don't know what they want (E1)	Each group has different needs (E3)
Enterprise focus provides for students' development (E1)	Students benefit from a range of experiences (C1, C4)
If enterprises prosper so do employees and region (E1)	More required than learning in one context (E3, C1)
Enterprise can identify needs (E6, C4)	Any sectional interests exclusive (E3)
Training has to relate to enterprise needs (E6)	
Need to enhance standing of industry (E1)	
Industry leadership required (C3)	
Co-ordination—*factors supporting*	**Co-ordination**—*factors inhibiting*
Too many individual offerings (E1)	Focus groups get swamped by large numbers of players (E3, C1)
Ill-focused efforts (C1)	Difficulties of collaboration in a market situation (C1)
Needs to be undertaken by or involving TAFE (E5)	Securing balance between educational and enterprise needs (E3, I2, I4)
Local planning important (E1, E3)	
Community needs identified and drawn upon (E2, E3)	
Students don't know what they want (E1)	
Each group has different needs (E3, E4, E5, C3)	
Ability exists to co-ordinate activities (I2	
Market not in community interest (C2)	
Benefits in both institutional and workplace provisions (I3, I2)	
Need to be strategic and prioritise (I1)	
Need to account for individual needs (FG2, FG3, E5)	
Representations to advocate and present a case (I1)	

Consultation

Consultative processes engaging and addressing the interests of all parties were advocated. These processes were proposed as a means of meeting all client groups' needs, and as being able to occur at the regional level. The consultative approach to planning was held to allow the region to develop and submit a consolidated case to State or federal decision-makers and funding bodies.

However, consultation was also viewed as problematic because of differing needs which may not be readily reconcilable (e.g. short-term and specific enterprise needs versus educational goals) through consultation. It was also held that the process might be dominated by interests with the resources available to participate in the consultative process. Added to this was concern that the demands of the market would inhibit fruitful consultations. Aligned with these concerns was that of enterprises who claimed that participation in such arrangements in the past were frustrated by the apparent irrelevance of what was discussed and proposed.

The consultative approach enjoys support from industry, community and enterprises. Most of the identified factors inhibiting this approach were proposed by industry and enterprise representatives.

Sectional interests

Sectional interests, and particularly those of enterprises, were proposed as a means of advancing the needs of all other client groups' interests. The proposal typified in the data was as follows. If enterprises prosper, they will provide employment and career progression for local individuals, the community will prosper, and industry goals for levels of skilfulness will accordingly be addressed (table A2.4). It was proposed that students' needs will be addressed through the provision of rich experiences in the workplace. Equally, it was claimed, not all client groups warrant equal legitimacy for inclusion. For example, students may not know what they need to learn. In other cases, it has also been suggested that enterprises do not really understand their needs or the processes for best realising their needs. Benefits in the form of greater interaction between enterprises and educational institutions were also proposed as likely to accrue.

Countering these views were concerns about a lack of diversity in student experiences, and the reactive nature and highly specific focus of VET provisions in the workplace. That is, there were concerns that the full range of needs and requirements of the community and those who lived within it were not likely to be addressed. Different needs existed within each group, and there was a concern that particular sectional interests might become exclusive. One enterprise acknowledged the problem of the need for learning to take place in more than one context (e.g. the workplace), and this should be considered in addressing all needs, rather than just sectoral needs.

Co-ordination

The co-ordination of VET provisions was proposed to be undertaken to plan and manage the needs of the four client groups. The co-ordinated approach was proposed by an industry informant as the means to address the artificial divisions of interests among the client groups, and consider the range of provisions more objectively. The need to involve providers, such as TAFE, is proposed by community and enterprise informants in an approach to local planning which identifies and draws upon community needs. The avoidance of individualised offerings, wasteful duplication or ill-focused efforts were proposed. Such a process has potential to be strategic, and avoid reactive and short-termist market-based provisions. Such a process could produce a consolidated case to engage in negotiations with State and federal decision-makers and funding bodies.

All four client groups were represented in advocating the co-ordination approach, with shortcomings being proposed by community informants.

So, in sum, the broad-based support for planning VET provisions that address all client groups' needs were polarised around the processes of best reconciling those needs, as well as concerns about which voices should be heard, the informed nature of those voices, and mechanisms that can reduce the differences in interests and needs. Opposing this was a market-based stratagem which subordinates planning to an inevitable outcome of market forces and needs within the community.

It seems that if co-ordination and consultation were to be undertaken in ways that managed and balanced the needs and inputs of the client groups, then together they might offer a way of proceeding—given the marketplace and the uneven knowledge of VET within all client groups. However, such a process is only likely to be successful if it is perceived to be taking into account all the interests of those most able to contribute (e.g. providers anxious to secure market share, and powerful economic or governmental voices). A balance has to be struck between a process that permits enterprise needs to be addressed and supported, yet does not see a raft of individualised offerings which are so idiosyncratic that both individuals' and industry goals are jeopardised. For instance, although the CFP offers flexibility, the non-completion rates of participants is too high for industry goals to be realised. Equally, with clerical work, some content and intents need to be identified which are both generic to the industry (keyboarding) and applications specific to enterprise needs. The likelihood of achieving this balance will not be uniform, and, as the delineation between public and privately funded provisions widen, it becomes more difficult to realise.

Having presented and briefly discussed the data on planning, the four groups' views on how vocational educators should best address their needs is presented and discussed next.

Roles for and characteristics of vocational educators

Subjects from all client groups were asked how vocational educators could assist developing the curriculum provisions which address the needs of the community, enterprises and individuals. The responses were diverse and plentiful, and are best presented under the heading of the *Roles of vocational educators* with a subsidiary heading addressing their characteristics. Data on vocational educators' roles warrant further delineation, in order to best categorise the respondents' views. These categories are: (i) *consultant*, (ii) *curriculum developer*, (iii) *instructor*, and (iv) *advocate and supporter of learners*. Table A2.6 presents the summarised data from the interviews and focus groups. They are categorised to form subheadings with the items which sit within the categories arrayed below. Respondents who are associated with the items are identified to the right of the item. The data from the student survey conducted for this study are depicted in table A2.7. This table indicates the frequency and percentage of responses from past, current and prospective students concerning what they believe should constitute the roles of a vocational educator.

Table A2.6: Roles of vocational educators

Consultant and educational leader—*dimensions of role*
Independent consultant (I1, E5)
Negotiating with enterprises (I1, E1, E3, E5, C3)
Identify how you can help (C1)
Knowledgeable in many areas (I1, E6, C2)
Demonstrate benefits of course (E1, C1, C4)
Add value to enterprise needs analysis (E1)
Understand enterprise perspective (I1, E2, E5, C3, FG1)
Provide leadership for community (C1)
Curriculum developer—*dimensions of role*
Determine needs of enterprise (E2, E3, C1)
Identify full range of needs (E5, I1, E1, C2,)
Adapt programs to enterprise needs (I1, E2, E5, C3)
Frequent interactions with enterprises to understand needs (I2, E2, E3, E5, C3, FG1)
Instructor—*dimensions of role*
Good teacher—varied teaching methods and presentation skills (I1, E1, C2, C1, C3, C4)
Just be a teacher (E6)
Provide practical instruction and opportunities to practise (I1)
Tailor instructional needs to the workplace (I1, E2, E5, C2, C2, C3)
Concerned about learning and transfer (I1, I2)
Communicate clearly with students (FG2)
Advocate and supporter of learners—*dimensions of role*
Compassionate about students (E6)
Motivate students and build interest (E7, C2, FG1, FG2)
Understand student readiness to progress (I1, E1, C2, FG1, FG2)
Counsel on pathways (E6, C2)

Table A2.7: Roles of vocational educators—student survey

Item	Past		Current		Prospective	
	Count	(%)	Count	(%)	Count	(%)
Good teacher	9	(50%)	19	(40%)	16	(36%)
Counsellor	2	(11%)	7	(15%)	5	(11%)
Career advisor	-		4	(9%)	2	(5%)
Friend	1	(6%)	4	(9%)	2	(5%)
Other	1	(6%)	3	(6%)	2	(5%)
Don't know/ no answer	5	(18%)	10	(21%)	17	(39%)
Total	**18**		**47**		**44**	

Consultant

Views from all four groups were instrumental in identifying the educator's role as a consultant. However, this view was raised most consistently by enterprise and community informants. Community informants proposed interactions with enterprises, and an educational leadership role in the community. This role is about vocational educators' roles in negotiating and consulting with enterprises to identify and realise their needs. This role includes demonstrating the utility of the proposed course to the enterprise, and having the ability to add something themselves to the enterprise's training needs and arrangements—that is, adding value. Within this role, the ability to negotiate with enterprises is supported most strongly. So educational leadership is manifested in two quite different ways: (i) as a leader in the community, and (ii) an ability to add value to enterprise needs.

Curriculum developer

Informants from community, industry and enterprises proposed that curriculum development was largely about the ability to identify the full range of enterprise needs and then adapt programs to meet these needs. Frequent interactions between educators and enterprises were proposed as a means of securing an understanding of their needs. So this role in developing educational provisions was most legitimated when the focus of determining educational intent and the context of courses was posited at the enterprise level of determination.

Instructor

Being a 'good teacher', characterised in terms of teaching methods and presentation skills, was supported by all four groups. The student survey emphasised particularly this role of the teacher (table A2.7). The ability to furnish opportunities to develop 'practical' skills was emphasised, as was the need to tailor instructional procedures to the exigencies of the workplace. Communicating clearly with students was valued by students. Within these aspects of the role was a demand to address students' learning and the transfer of the learnt knowledge.

Advocate and supporter of learners

From community informants, students focus groups and surveys was a demand for the vocational educator to be compassionate about students, facilitate their development through support, guidance and the provision of motivation. Understanding students needs was extended to an appreciation of their readiness to progress. Being supportive of students extended to providing advice on career and educational pathways.

Characteristics of vocational educators

In addition to roles for vocational educators, the subjects proposed characteristics concerning how they should conduct themselves. These are as follows:

- content wise (having good industry knowledge, experience, spending time in the workplace)
- expert in the area
- flexible
- communicator
- add value to work
- practical in approach
- professional in approach

The shift to an enterprise-based provision of vocational education was evident in the responses to the roles of vocational educators. In particular, the determination of curriculum intents (aims, goals, objectives) was seen to necessarily reflect enterprise requirements. However, the different interests of the client groups are reflected here. Even where there was an apparently common view (e.g. the role of an instructor), the intent differs. Enterprise viewed the role of instruction as teaching the things that the enterprise needs, in ways that address the participants' needs. The students' responses support the former in terms of relevance—rather than enterprise-specific learning—but the latter in the same way as the enterprises. Yet it was in the advocate role where there was a concentration of student needs (see table A2.6)—not all of which are easily reconcilable with the characterisation of the consultant and curriculum developer roles, which were so strongly proposed by enterprises.

Curriculum development was seen as situating curriculum at the enterprise level, albeit adapting industry prescriptions to enterprise needs. Such an approach is analogous to the school-based curriculum movement (e.g. Skilbeck 1984), although determination of intents is focused upon only two sets of interests. The implementation of curriculum (instruction) was seen as a process of good teaching to realise the goals set by enterprises. Addressing learners' needs was very much in terms of their ability to achieve what was set for them by industry and enterprise. Consideration of individuals' aspirations are very restricted here, other than the provision of advice concerning which of the given educational or career pathways were most appropriate.

The concern here is one of the robustness of the knowledge and the potential for transfer. Current views suggest that ideas about generic competencies fail to define or permit transfer (Stevenson 1996; Beven 1997). Nor should it be assumed that transferable knowledge can be secured either in the classroom or the workplace without enriching the learning experiences in either of these settings. This may be achieved by making accessible the knowledge likely to transfer, and then advancing prospects for transfer through a consideration of the application of that knowledge to other circumstances. Such instructional interventions require planning, an appreciation of the formulation of educational intents and processes, careful implementation by teachers, and solid engagement by learners. All of these are unlikely to be secured by workplace practitioners who are unaware of these requirements, or inexperienced in the application of techniques associated with maximising transfer (Billett 1996).

Tables A2.6 and A2.7 display a significant change in the role of vocational educators, in the shift to an enterprise focus. Throughout the last decade of industry domination of the curriculum processes, teachers were valued as 'implementers' whose role was to implement with uniformity that which was determined by others. Now, the demands articulated here refer to teachers becoming adapters, designers and researchers (to use Marland's categories cited in Print [1987]). It is unclear, after over a decade of effort to secure subservience to industry mandations, how vocational educators will best be able to shift readily to the new roles required of them, in ways that secure educational goals for all client groups.

Perspectives on community service obligations

Community and industry representatives were asked what they understood by the term 'community service obligations', and also about their relationship to the market. These data were gathered to gauge whether the key role in the public provision of vocational education—to promote wide access and support those who might be disadvantaged in the labour market—still has currency with these client groups. The importance of gaining insights into this issue, and others below, is not only to appraise changing views but also to understand the perspectives of these views. If, for instance, one view is to predominate, it is important to critically appraise this view. Equally, as new views begin to have their impact (e.g. enterprise, community), it is important to understand what perspective their views carry. Moreover, it is necessary to understand the degree to which these voices are 'informed'. The two issues addressed here are (i) perceptions of what should comprise community service obligations, and (ii) what relationship is proposed between these obligations and the pressures of the market. So the data summarised in table A2.8a represent the views of industry and community informants under subheadings that state their conceptions of CSO, and how these are positioned in relation to the market. To the right of the responses under these subheadings are identified the subjects who proposed and support these items.

Table A2.8a: Conceptions of community service obligations

Permit access to courses (I1, I3, C4, C3)
Addressing disadvantage—access and equity—underachievers (I1, I3, C1, C2, C4)
Accessibility at an appropriate level to justify government funding (I1)
Dual responsibility between government and recipient (I1, C3)
Up-skill workforce (I1)

Table A2.8b: Balance between market and CSO

Legislation required to counter market excesses (I1, C2)
Market proposes flexibility but also creates instability and disadvantage (e.g. small business and remote communities) (I1, C2)
Loss of focus on longer term goals (I1)
Pursuit of market goals may result in the neglect of local need (I1, C2, C4, C3)
Private sector success predicates ability to furnish CSO (C1)
For VET to be viable it has to engage the market (C1)
Programs would not be viable without public funding (VET-in-Schools) (C4)
Employer subsidies required (C3)
Small businesses overlooked (I1, C4)

The responses varied from those who provided interpretations that carried with them particular sets of values, to those who interpreted the concept in a particular way. Of the former, statements included the importance of access and equity. Particular interpretations referred to industry obligations in the workplace, emphasising the need for safe work practice in the food processing industry. Others interpreted the question as being associated with a community focus of 'acting within the community'. This range of responses were indicative of a concept that has a particular meaning, seen in the past as being central to the public provision of vocational education. Some of these interpretations suggested that, as a wider range of interests are brought to play in decision-making within VET, existing values are likely to be challenged. However, the views of particular interests may seek to transform key values and priorities for vocational education.

The question about appropriate balance between CSOs and the market (table A2.8b) elicited responses that noted both concerns about and support for the market. Industry informants proposed the need for legislation and external monitoring of VET provisions to address market excesses, the failure of the market to deliver flexibility, and concerns about a longer term view than can be realised through market-based approaches. Community respondents expressed concerns about local needs being neglected, the need for partnerships, and the need for public funding to keep programs viable. Those supportive of the market approach emphasised that private sector success underwrites the provision of CSO. Finally, a community view stated that VET has to engage in the market to be viable. Evidence above suggests that this message has already been acknowledged and acted upon. However, one community respondent suggested that the only way to keep TAFE 'on track' was to have a market for each and every TAFE provision. Given the history of unsuccessful attempts in this region to create and sustain a market through non-market interventions, it

would seem fanciful that such arrangements could ever be viable. The problem of 'thin markets' has been acknowledged (Burke 1995) in communities such as this rural centre region. Other ways to secure clients' needs may well serve the region far better. Certainly, the data below on the performance of the TAFE institute cast doubts on easy criticisms of the TAFE provision.

Changing relationships

There is evidence that relationships within decision-making are changing. Within those relationships, there is a new emphasis on enterprises and conceptions of how the planning for and practice within VET curriculum is being transformed. Beyond expectations of teachers' practice are transformations in the nature of how curriculum intents are to be negotiated and implemented. The enterprise focus privileges a view of curriculum planning which reflects particular sectoral interests—presumably, at least in part, at a cost to others. The needs of other client groups are not always readily or easily aligned with these particular interests. Concerns about specificity and the reactive nature of the enterprise focus was raised in reference to the likely impact of the enterprise focus, and of a planning approach that denies other voices. Equally, the roles and expectations of vocational educators are not always easily reconciled with the demands of enterprises and, for instance, of students. Even community interests, which are often aligned to enterprise requirements, do not always sit comfortably with all of their perspectives. However, enterprise funding of their own VET provisions adds a legitimacy to their demands for customised training. Coincidentally, market considerations are making the provisions such as those offered by TAFE reactive, perhaps, rather than responsive. All this suggests that, in different ways, the decision-making within VET provisions and curriculum is being transformed by factors associated with the market. The concern is whether these are in the best interests of all client groups.

So, approaches to reconciling all these needs are likely to be problematic. In order to appraise more fully how these concerns might be progressed, the next section furnishes an array of data concerning the current state of vocational education provisions in the regions at a general level, and then specifically for the food processing and clerical sectors. This is to be used as a basis to consider—in the fourth section entitled 'What should be'—the ideals of the four client groups, in trying to fashion a response which seeks to reconcile and address the needs of these four groups.

Section 3: 'What is'

This section provides and discusses data about the current VET provisions for the client groups, and how they are addressing their needs. The section furnishes data on the cohort of students, the kinds of outcomes they want from the current courses, and how those courses are addressing those needs.

Individuals

The data on individual participation in the VET system at the RCIT were of two kinds: (i) that derived from the GDS, which was general in kind, and (ii) that derived from the surveys and focus groups administered specifically for this project. The former is global data drawn from graduates of the RCIT who responded to the GDS survey; the latter is from respondents in the clerical and food processing industries only. The data on individuals are organised under the headings of *Profile of participants*, *Modes of study* and *Satisfaction with course*.

Profile of participants

As shown in table A2.9, the graduates from the RCIT are slightly older on average than their counterparts across South Australia, and indeed Australia. Women have graduated from RCIT at a slightly higher rate than the State average, although at a lower rate than the national average. Students with an ATSI background are less likely to have graduated from RCIT than throughout the State or nationally. Equally, graduates from a non-English speaking background are less frequent than across the States or the nation. Students with disabilities are on par with national and State levels. Students at RCIT were less likely to be unemployed when they commenced their course than counterparts in the State or nationally. In terms of country of birth, graduates from RCIT were more likely to be born in Australia than their counterparts across the State or nationally. Similarly, they were considerably less likely to be born in a non-English speaking country than their counterparts at the State or national level. The RCIT graduates were more likely to be employed when they commenced their studies than students elsewhere in the State or nationally.

This profile suggest an older cohort of students, typically male, Australian born, English speaking, who were likely to be employed when they commenced their studies.

Table A2.9: Demographic and equity access groups

	RCIT	State	Australia
Median age for graduates	29	28	28
Women graduates	49%	48%	56%
Graduates from ATSI background	0%	1%	1%
Graduates from NESB	10%	23%	32%
Graduates with disability	6%	6%	6%
Unemployed prior to commencing course	12%	17%	18%
Country of birth			
Australia	242 (94%)	4238 (82%)	44 766 (74%)
Other countries (NESB)	5 (2%)	450 (9%)	11 668 (19%)

Note: 258 graduates from RCIT.
Source: Graduate destination survey (RCIT).

As tables A2.10 and A2.11 indicate, the industries and positions in which the graduates were likely to be employed reflect local industry sectors and positions requiring at least entry-level qualifications. The employment emphasis upon

agriculture, manufacturing and retailing reflect the rural centre's role as a provincial and manufacturing centre. These data will provide a useful comparison with the other cases.

Table A2.10: Industries in which graduates were most likely to have employment at 30/5/1997

Most	Second most	Third most
37% Agriculture	15% Manufacturing	9% Retail

Source: Graduate destination survey (RCIT).

Table A2.11: Most common occupational groups for graduates employed at 30/5/1997

Most	Second most	Third most
23% Managers	19% Labourers	18% tradespersons

Note: Occupations based on Australian Standards Classification of Occupation (ASCO) codes.
Source: Graduate destination survey (RCIT).

Graduates and employment

The graduates from RCIT reported a higher than national and State percentage for employment, as depicted in table A2.12. The institute's graduates reported lower percentages of unemployment than the State or national average. In terms of graduates who were unemployed prior to commencing their TAFE course but found work, RCIT had a higher level than State or national averages. Equally, graduates who undertook their study to gain employment were higher than both State and national averages.

Table A2.12: Graduates and employment

	RCIT	State	Australia
Graduates employed	86%	79%	71%
Graduates unemployed	9%	12%	15%
Graduates unemployed before commencing their TAFE course, found work by 30/5/97	71%	57%	46%
Graduates who gave their main reason for doing the course as 'to get a job (or own business)', employed by 30/5/97	71%	66%	61%

Source: Graduate destination survey (RCIT).

Modes

The certificate level award was the most common award at the institute, as indicated in table A2.13. Typically, graduates took 21 months to complete their courses. The most commonly reported means of delivery was 'classes at college', although this was far from being a uniform provision at 52 per cent. Again, these data will be used to make comparisons across the case regions.

Table A2.13: Course details

Course details	RCIT
Most common qualification	Certificate—other
Main method of delivery	Classes at college

Source: Graduate destination survey (RCIT).

So, in sum, graduates were generally more likely to have secured employment than the averages for the State and the nation.

Satisfaction

In tables A2.14 to A2.16, data are reported of the graduates' responses to measures of satisfaction. Overall, these measures are reported in very positive terms, with graduates reporting levels of satisfaction higher than State or national averages. In particular, measures that are attributable to the activities and performance of the institutions and teachers are generally reported very positively (see table A2.16). Interestingly, those factors below State or national average levels of performance are attributable to factors outside the direct influence of educators or the educational institutions.

Table A2.14 presents quantitative data on five satisfaction measures associated with the outcomes of courses. Graduates' measures of having achieved their goals were, for RCIT, consistently higher than State and national percentages. The measures of realising advancements in the workplace were on par with State and national percentages. Measures of relevance were higher than national or State levels. Moreover, levels of graduates who rated their courses as eight or more out of ten were considerably higher than both State or national levels. These data suggest that in the areas where the institute could exert most leverage, the quality of courses for students were regarded positively. This is also reinforced by the data presented in table A2.16.

Table A2.14: Satisfaction outcomes

Percentage of graduates	RCIT	State	Australia
Cited vocational reasons as their main purpose for doing the course	84%	84%	77%
Claimed they achieved or partly achieved, their reasons for doing the course	87%	80%	78%
Did the course for vocational reasons, and felt they had experienced improvements in remuneration, promotion or desired job	68%	68%	64%
Main reason for taking the course was vocational, and were employed and thought the course was either relevant or somewhat relevant	85%	82%	79%
Rated the course eight or more out of ten	74%	68%	68%

Source: Graduate destination survey (RCIT).

These measures are also evident in table A2.15. However, the percentage of graduates who claim they have received none of the benefits outlined above is

noteworthy. In particular, the responses from the part-time students were high. However, this likely reflects more upon opportunities in the local community than the quality of provisions provided by RCIT. Also noteworthy was the difference of the global measures between full- and part-time students at the institute. The positive measures of the relevance of the institute's courses was also contrary to the perceptions of some enterprise and community informants, who have stated in a number of places in this case study that the performance of TAFE and its teachers—and in particular the relevance of what they teach—was questionable. The data in this table will be most useful in cross-regional comparisons.

Table A2.15: Benefits and outcomes

Benefits	Full-time	(Part-time)
Increase in earnings	44%	(13%)
Change of job/new job	30%	(27%)
Any of the above benefits	68%	(37%)
None of above benefits	31%	(63%)
Relevance of the course		
Graduates' belief course was of high or some relevance to their job	85%	
Graduates' belief course was of very little or no relevance to their job	11%	

Source: Graduate destination survey (RCIT).

In table A2.16 the data are presented on the ratings of 11 aspects of the courses in which the graduates were enrolled. In the left-hand column are the items; in the two columns to their right are the percentages for the institutes. The percentage without brackets is for a rating of eight, nine or ten; the percentage in brackets is for a rating between four and seven. The highest grades are for the teachers' knowledge and the overall quality of the course. Areas less positively appraised are associated with advice and information on courses and jobs. Only one measure goes below 50 per cent, on a rating of between eight and ten.

Table A2.16: Ratings of aspects of courses

Items and rating	RCIT rated 8–10	(rated 4–7)
Your instructor's knowledge of course content	79%	(19%)
Overall quality of course	74%	(25%)
Convenience of venue and class times	67%	(29%)
Making assessment methods clear	70%	(26%)
Presentation of course material	63%	(35%)
Usefulness of course to job	76%	(19%)
Content reflecting industry practice	65%	(33%)
Quality of equipment	63%	(33%)
Balance between instruction and practice	63%	(34%)
Information received when choosing course, subjects and modules	63%	(30%)
Information about careers and jobs available	43%	(45%)

Source: Graduate destination survey (RCIT).

These measures of satisfaction are informative in highlighting the aggregated perceptions of graduates. They believe their course provisions were well organised, their teachers knowledgeable and the courses relevant. Ratings that are not as high as others, or do not compare favourably with State or national factors, are often not directly attributable to the institute's activities. So, overall, the graduates who responded to the GDS overwhelmingly supported the quality of the TAFE provisions offered through these institutes. That is, one client group (individuals) expressed satisfaction at the way the VET provisions offered through TAFE institutes have addressed their needs.

Measures of satisfaction were also elicited in the interviews and focus groups specifically conducted for this project. In the next section, summaries of data from all four client groups are presented and discussed.

Client groups' satisfaction with VET provisions

Informants from all four client groups were asked to indicate what VET provisions existed and how these address and/or failed to address their needs (see tables A2.17 to A2.20). Table A2.17 provides summaries of this data. In the left-hand column, summaries of data are presented about how VET provisions address the needs of industry, enterprises, regions and individuals, drawing upon informants from each of those groups. Each summary statement is followed by the identity of the respondent. The right column follows the same format, providing summaries of ways in which these provisions fail to address the client groups' needs.

Table A2.17: Satisfaction with VET provisions

Addressing needs of industry	**Not addressing needs of industry**
Operator-level courses flexible, varied and accessible (I1, I2)	Enterprises not getting enough customisation (I2)
Able to address enterprises' needs (I1, I2)	Problems with delivery to small and remote businesses (I1, I2)
Separate courses for each industry sector (I1)	Workplace-based provision, secondary to productivity (I2, I3)
Catering to school leavers and returnees (I1, I3)	Non-completion of food certificate (I2)
Meeting needs well (I1, I3)	Different standards of courses (I2)
Flexibility (I1)	Training packages eroding industry framework (I1)
Addressing learners' needs (I2)	
On-the-job assessment (I2)	
Addressing needs of enterprises	**Not addressing needs of enterprises**
Basic skills learnt at TAFE (E1, E3, E4, E6)	Adapting to enterprise needs varied in success (E1)
Content adapted to enterprise needs (E4, E5)	Beyond technical needs—other skills need addressing (customer relations) (E4)
Up-skilling opportunities with enterprise and individuals contributing (E1,E2, E5)	Not enough customisation to enterprise needs (E1)
TAFE flexible with provisions (E2, E3, E4, E5)	Inconsistency across TAFE provision (E1)
Useful collaboration with TAFE (E1, E5, E6)	Approaches to instruction not addressing needs of learners (E2)
Courses provide theoretical grounding (E1)	Not sufficient integration between on- and off-job components (E2, E3)
Tailored to meet the needs of the organisation (E1, E2, E5)	Inadequacy of distance provisions (E1, E3)
On-job provision most important because of specificity of tasks (E2, E3)	Too many providers dilute quality (E1)
Accredited nationally, and portable (E2, E3)	Teachers may not be familiar with area of work (E1, E2)
TAFE excellent (E3)	Team work (E5)
Applicable to the workplace (E3)	Greater access to teachers (E7)

Addressing needs of region	Not addressing needs of region
TAFE has become very flexible and accommodating (C1, C2, C3)	Geographical distribution of students makes access difficult (C1, C2, C4)
Learning support unit at TAFE (C3)	Problems with encouraging small business to participate in training (C1, C4)
Positive feedback on TAFE by job applicants (C3)	TAFE not aware of enterprise needs (C1, C3)
Overall the quality of courses good (C2)	Some TAFE teachers not addressing enterprise needs (C1, C4)
VET-in-schools programs (C1)	Not enough employers taking on apprentices (C1, C3, C2)
Addressing local needs (C1)	Support required from local enterprises (C1, C3, C4)
Links between TAFE and schools (C3)	Practical learning (C3)
	Enterprises will not train casual workforce (C1)
	Students have to leave to do courses (C2, C3)
Addressing needs of individuals	**Not addressing needs of individuals**
Access to courses in the workplace (FG1, FG2)	Level of study not always appropriate (FG1, FG3)
Certification (FG2)	Some modules inappropriate without interaction (FG2)
Hours and patterns of attendance (FG1, FG2)	Longer periods of preparation for basic skills (FG1)
Transferable skills (FG1)	Practical preparation more thorough (FG1, FG2)
Self-pacing useful (FG3)	Content repeated—not integrated into work activities (FG1, FG2)
Negotiated learning arrangements (FG1)	Amount of personal time required to study (FG1)
Integration with workplace activities (FG1, FG3)	Access to teachers (FG1)

Industry

Industry informants emphasised the way that the current provisions are being offered to meet enterprise needs through flexibility in access. In particular, strands in the food processing provisions permit relevance in course provisions. In the clerical sector, the provisions address the needs of school leavers and older workers returning to work.

It was stated that current VET provisions were failing to meet industry needs through insufficient enterprise customisation, and the difficulty of addressing small and remote businesses. There was an emphasis upon pre-vocational rather than more advanced courses, and a belief that many students were accessing these courses out of a lack of choice. Concerns were expressed about the priority given to learning in workplace-based provisions, and the high incidence of non-completion of the CFP, because enterprises only sponsored those modules they thought essential. Concerns about different standards for courses were raised regarding an enterprise focus and delivery to small and remote businesses. Yet, other issues were associated with the breadth of providers now engaged in the field of food processing, and the quality of those providers. The concerns about standards were linked to lack of 'front-end' regulation in the training market (I1). Again, concerns about the ability of the market (enterprises) to be discerning was evident.

So, in all, the industry representatives noted how individual and enterprise needs were being addressed effectively. Concerns about structures of courses (an industry responsibility), and the inadequacy of work-based provisions in addressing individual as well as enterprise needs, were also advanced and supported. Again, more customisation was called for, and solutions to provisions for enterprises that are small and/or remote. However, conflicting concerns about the loss of uniformity in provisions and the erosion of standards through enterprise customisation and marketplace strategies was reported.

Enterprises

Enterprise representatives acknowledged the role of TAFE in entry-level training, and the way that enterprise needs had been accommodated within customised curricula. The flexibility of TAFE was acknowledged, as was the value of collaboration between enterprises and TAFE. In addition, the value of both on- and off-job experiences was proposed by respondents. The excellence of the TAFE provision and the ability of TAFE teachers to set up training systems in workplaces was stated by one enterprise. Overall, the adequacy of the dual responsibilities and provisions, and the certification that was forthcoming, were proposed as addressing enterprise needs and also those of the individuals who undertook the courses.

Conversely, informants held that enterprise customisation had not yet gone far enough, and was of mixed success. Equally, concerns about the degree of integration between on- and off-job provisions were proposed. As with industry respondents, there were concerns about provisions focused upon the workplace: adequacy of distance modes of learning, teachers' knowledge, and inconsistency across TAFEs. In addition, there were concerns about the widening field of providers, opportunities for genuine learning, and whether the best methods for learning were being adopted. So the focus of concern was upon inadequacies in the provision of VET tailored to the needs of enterprises and its employees. The most common shortcoming was the degree of customisation or tailoring that enterprises believed should occur. Interestingly, some of the shortcomings reported from enterprises seemed to be fuelled by concerns about a publicly funded provider; others seemed predisposed to be dismissive of TAFE, or have conflicting concerns. In situations where the impression was of a genuine effort at working together, there was strong support and respect. It is worth noting that the level of criticism of TAFE provisions was not always supported by the evidence proffered.

Overall, some enterprises were satisfied with the provisions, whereas others were not. It seems that the dissatisfaction was over degree rather than the ability and willingness of current VET provisions to address enterprise needs. Significantly, each of the enterprises demanding more customisation had at one point praised the flexibility, existing customisation, and adequacy of the current provisions. This usually referred to those provided by TAFE, albeit through facilitated processes of support and distance provisions.

Regions

The informants for the region expressed satisfaction with the flexible approach adopted by TAFE in addressing local needs. Overall, the quality of courses was held to be very good. Positive links had been established between TAFE and the VET-in-schools programs. The view from these informants was that the needs of the enterprises and individuals of the region were being well catered for.

Concerns raised by these community informants were associated with resourcing to make VET provisions accessible to remote students, those with special needs, and the possible diversion of resources into large companies. There were some concerns by a community representative that TAFE was not fully aware of local enterprise needs, and that some TAFE teachers were not addressing enterprise needs. However, more concerns were directed at enterprises and their lack of participation. The decline in population (projections of -3.5 per cent by 2005)—particularly in the 0–19 year age group—the ageing of that population (40 per cent are currently 55–64 years old), and low levels of unemployment, indicate a potential shortage of labour/skilled workers (sourced from 1996 data from an area consultative committee). However, here it was reported that employers were reluctant to participate more fully in VET provisions. It was reported that enterprises are aware of the potential shortfall but believe that government will respond to any skill shortage (C1).

So, many of the concerns of the region did not question the adequacy of the existing VET provision. Instead, they were concerned about resourcing, the willingness of enterprises to participate, and the impact of competition policy on the region, as much as criticisms of the adequacy of TAFE or its teachers.

Individuals

Student informants in the focus groups and surveys provided data about the quality of provisions (access, flexibility, attendance patterns, options, integration of experiences) and outcomes (transferable skills, confidence and skills, certification). Tables A2.18–A2.20 provide data from the survey of past, present and current students engaged in food processing and clerical studies. The format for each table is the same. In the left column is the item that the students volunteered, and across the three right columns are the frequencies with which students referred to these items. Table A2.18 aggregates the responses to how the teaching and learning arrangements addressed the students' needs. Tables A2.19 and A2.20, respectively refer to how the teaching and learning arrangements did not address their needs, or how the course failed to address their work goals. These data are used to augment the data from the focus groups provided in table A2.17.

Table A2.18: Appropriateness of teaching and learning arrangements

	Past	Current	Prospective
Self-paced		17	6
In line with expectations	11		
Appropriate level	1		
Good teacher support	2		
Challenging	2		
Convenient		11	21
Class size		3	
Teaching and learning arrangements not important			7

Table A2.19: How teaching and learning arrangements had not addressed needs

	Past	Current	Prospective
None	8	10	21
Not enough attention from teacher	1	6	1
Not enough time	1		3
Schedule/timetabling	3	1	
Motivation		2	10
Relevance	2	6	

Table A2.20: How course fails to address work goals and location

	Past	Current	Prospective
Doesn't fail	11	10	11
Relevance		5	4
Lacked relevance to workplace	3		
Level too basic	1		1

Students valued the access to workplace practice organised through TAFE, the certification, and the transferability of knowledge they learnt in the college provision. The self-paced approach was seen to address their needs (supported by current and prospective students in the survey). The most commonly proposed response from the on-campus respondents was the convenience of the mode of study. This referred to the flexibility in timetabling to address the needs of the students (e.g. family and work commitments). Students in the focus groups emphasised how much effort the teachers went to in order to be flexible about their demands. They reported that teachers made themselves and facilities available prior to the morning's start so that students could gain additional practice on basic skills. Links between on- and off-job components featured strongly in the students' perceptions of the current provisions.

Concerns about the courses include the levels of work, access to additional practice, assumptions about students' readiness to progress in a course, difficulties with distance provisions for both workplace and independent students, the amount of time required, and problems imposed by shift work. Concerns from campus-based students were associated with the need for longer periods of preparation and reinforcement of basic skills, the repetition of some material, and accessing teacher time. Significantly, in both tables A2.19 and

A2.20, when asked how the arrangements had failed to address their needs, students responded quite uniformly and with the highest frequencies that the provisions had not failed to address their needs.

So, the needs of enterprises and individuals are being met, albeit in different ways. Enterprise needs were through the tailoring of provisions and being responsive. Although there is some dissent from this view, it is one of degree, with all enterprises expressing support for the provisions that they have been able to access. Students, in a number of ways, have expressed overall satisfaction in their provisions. Many of the concerns of industry are about the erosion of national prescription, and the lack of quality control through a market-based approach. The view from industry is that the purchasers (enterprises) may not be informed, and drawn to make decisions on a cost-only basis. There is some evidence to contest this view, with one enterprise querying the differences in costings provided by both a TAFE and a private provider. However, with the erosion of 'front-end' regulatory arrangements to which providers had to submit, there is concern that this deregulation will lead to a dilution of standards of instruction and assessment, as well as to the erosion of national training provisions which have been the product of exhaustive consultation. Small business remains a problem—even more so when it is remote. It is usually least well placed to address its own needs, and not in a strong position to negotiate with providers. So there is a dichotomy between small and large enterprises in terms of training provisions that rely upon market-based provisions.

The community appears to be divided, into those who believe the market-based approach is the one most likely to secure regional goals, and those who have concerns for interests not addressed well by the market. The former are closely aligned to the needs of enterprises, seeing regional development closely aligned to that of its enterprises (usually large enterprises). The second group are concerned about broader sets of interests. The failure of previous market-based provisions (created and subsequently eroded by successive waves of government policy) in this region, and its relative isolation, lead others to consider alternatives. One enterprise has succession arrangements in place because of the difficulty of attracting particular expertise. For this enterprise, the market has not worked.

So what arrangements are in place for planning? In the next section, current regional planning is identified and discussed.

Regional planning

The informants from all groups were asked how the planning for VET addressed the needs of enterprises, individuals and regions. The responses were not plentiful, although different perspectives emerged from the data. Table A2.21 presents these data under headings which present the responses from the informants by client group. Three themes emerge:

1 Market-based approaches (e.g. enterprise-based arrangements, User Choice provisions) have removed the need for planning. Direct

consultation with enterprises and the development of enterprise-based provisions had removed the need for planning.

2 Planning was not occurring. This view was supported by concerns that the competitive environment inhibits the prospect for collaborative planning, as the providers—who possess much of the important knowledge—are in competition with each other. Moreover, individuals (e.g. students) are not represented on planning forums. Equally, it is claimed that the industry advisory boards are not representing enterprises.

3 Planning is occurring informally, and has potential to go further, through TAFE and regional planning agencies.

Table A2.21: Planning at a regional level

Region
Planning not occurring (C1, C2)
Being addressed through enterprise consultation (I3, I2)
Regional consultation agencies (e.g. RDB, ACC) (C4, C1)
TAFE's informal links and planning (I2)
Schools' regional management committee (C4)
Works when it happens (e.g. timber industry) (C1)
Enterprises
Planning replaced by enterprise-specific training and User Choice provisions (I2)
Individuals
Individuals not involved (C2, C3)
Industry
Constraints for an emerging industry (e.g. food processing) at a time of fiscal restraint (I1)

Note:
RDB–regional development based
ACC–area consultative committee

Arising from these views are concerns that, if enterprise needs are being addressed through the marketplace, this obviates the need for planning. Such a view posits enterprise needs as being the only ones worthy of consideration. In addition, the idea that market provisions remove the need for planning fails to address important strategic goals for vocational education. So, it seems that the existing planning is largely informal and that concerns of enterprises and individuals are not being considered. The needs of enterprises is held to be through the market rather than planning. Hence, in the current circumstance, there is no clear view of whether a consultative or a co-ordinated approach (or some combination of the two) is most likely to be enacted. In the meantime, sectional interests may well prevail.

Lifelong learning

The concept of lifelong learning has recently become part of government policy rhetoric. It has been transformed from a concept associated with individuals' personal development throughout their life, to a view about how individuals need to maintain their skills currency throughout their life, preferably at their own expense (Billett et al. 1997). Such a shift in the conceptualisation of this

term captures the kinds of transformations taking place in public policy in Western countries. Here, it is useful to determine the degree to which the view about lifelong learning has been transformed. Also, it is necessary to gauge the ways that available provisions permit individuals to maintain currency and progression. Consequently, subjects representing enterprise, industry and community perspectives were asked firstly what they thought the term meant. Then they were asked how this provision was being addressed in current VET provisions.

Three interpretations emerged from analysis of the responses. Firstly, the view that lifelong learning referred to 'meeting ongoing skill development needs' and the 'ability to meet changing goals' was supported by enterprise and industry respondents. Secondly, 'individuals learn throughout their lives anyway' was proposed by industry, enterprise and community representatives. Thirdly, enterprise and community representatives proposed continual training and upgrading of qualifications. So, it was the enterprise and industry respondents who proposed the economic viewpoint as an outcome of, and goal for, lifelong learning. Community representatives as well as enterprises and industry advanced learning as a continual process. These perspectives represent views about goals for learning, processes of learning and formal mechanisms.
As with views about planning, the data here depict the views of the client groups which have had, and, seemingly, are likely to have, great influence over VET provisions in the future. However, there is potential for reconciling the different viewpoints here. There is common acceptance of learning as an ongoing process, and a belief that formal provisions and recognition are likely to be useful. What is in contest are the goals for that learning: whether it should be wider than just work-related outcomes. In addition, there are different views about the degree to which the provision of opportunities alone is adequate, and the expectation that individuals will fund their own development. Again, there is little likelihood of consensus on these matters.

Table A2.22: Meaning of lifelong learning

Meaning
Meeting ongoing skill development needs (E1, E4, E5, C1, C2, C3, I1)
Part of ongoing change process everyday life (I3, E6, C1)
Continuous learning for individual—we learn all the time (I3, E3)
Ability to meet changing goals—keeping up (E3, E4)
Continual training/upgrading qualifications (E4, E5, C1, C3)
Learning in workplace (E2)
Not just a career (I5, E5)

Table A2.23: How lifelong learning is being addressed

Method
Combination of formal and informal learning is best (C1)
Formalised structures (courses, qualifications, AQF) (I1, I2, I3, C1)
Access to modules (not certificates) (C1)
Developing a training culture (I1, E4)
Individual responsibility (I3)
Provision of opportunities (I3, C2, E4, C1, C2, C3)
Provisions not always available (E4)
Succession planning (E4)
Structured learning in workplace (C1)

Table A2.23 presents collated summaries of the data from the respondents about the measures in place for skills maintenance and development to occur through individuals' lives. These responses can be categorised into *Provisions*, *Values* and *Concerns*.

Provisions

The existence of formal educational structures was proposed forcefully by representatives of all three groups. Additional to this were the suggested strategies of RPL, self-directed learning, combinations of on- and off-job provisions, mandated enterprise-based processes and the development of training cultures within enterprises, as processes likely to support lifelong learning. These means were supported by all three groups of informants.

Values

The values underpinning how lifelong provisions should be realised are of two kinds. These are: (i) the provision of opportunities, and (ii) individuals' responsibilities. These two values are interlinked: the provision of access to opportunities and the individual's responsibility to make the most of the opportunity. However, in the food processing industry, access to opportunities resides with the enterprise and may not be broadly available. Hence, what is accessible is constrained. As stated below, access is different for those who are and are not employees.

Concerns

The concerns expressed by respondents referred to the unavailability of provisions, and a concern that access to modules rather than complete courses was happening. These concerns were advanced by all categories of informants. The last two concerns relate particularly to the food processing sector, where the availability of modules is at the employer's discretion. Those modules deemed not to be required by the enterprise are not always available to employees. This situation has led to concern about the numbers of individuals actually completing the CFP: it is quite low compared with those who have completed modules. The concern here is that an enterprise-focused approach may inhibit, or make impossible, access to ongoing opportunities for advancement. If

employment is a requirement to progress in courses, there will inevitably be inequities and barriers to individuals' progression.

The data presented above, and discussions about the findings, have indicated different patterns of the way current VET provisions are addressing the needs of the client groups. Strong support from graduates about the quality of TAFE provisions is reflected in the views of some enterprise, community, industry and student informants. What is clear is that there is an emerging orthodoxy which is focusing on enterprise-specific arrangements. Even goals associated with access and equity are being transformed to accommodate this new orthodoxy.

However, concerns about this shift were evident in how planning for VET should best progress, how teachers' roles should be thought about, and provisions for the ongoing career progression of individuals within the region.

Having presented data and discussed the current situation, the next section addresses views about 'What should be'.

Section 4: 'What should be'

In order to advance a view about how each of the client groups' needs, interests and aspirations can best be addressed, data about these have been discussed—and from this an attempt will be made to provide a pathway between what currently occurs and what should happen in a changing environment within vocational education. From the heading entitled Changing relationships, it is evident that a shift is occurring towards an enterprise-focused approach to vocational education. This is probably more so in the food processing industry sector, which has more direct links between enterprises and providers, than in the clerical sector. However, if the practice in the former sector is illustrative of likely changes in the future, it is important to consider how best other needs can be addressed. In addition, there is a clear dichotomy emerging between the place of small and large enterprises in these new arrangements. As has been shown in the previous section, many of the changes to an enterprise-based approach are premised upon moves to impose market principles and practices into vocational education. In addition, constraints are being brought about by a vocational education system that is seeking to manage shifts in its funding base, and rely more heavily upon the contributions of enterprises and individuals. As has emerged above, there is an orthodoxy that is developing to accommodate these changes. However, unless the strategic needs of each industry, the developmental needs of regions and individuals' aspirations are addressed—as well as those of enterprises—then it is unlikely that the VET system will fulfil its role within the community.

Therefore, it is important to determine what each of the four client groups wants from the VET system. In order to be informed about these wants, the informants were asked to identify their needs and aspirations in the form of ideals and views about what constitutes a quality VET provision. In addition, enterprise informants were asked about what it means to be an expert in their workplace, in order to determine the goals for vocational education programs, how best

they should negotiate curriculum and engage in partnerships with providers, and what would encourage them to invest more in VET. The following section presents and discusses the responses to these questions.

Reasons for doing courses

Data about what individuals want from course were sought from students. Two sources are referred to here: those from the graduate destination survey, and surveys of past, current and prospective students in either food processing or clerical studies. Most of the respondents were from the clerical area. Table A2.24 reports data from the GDS, whereas tables A2.25 and A2.26 report students' aggregated responses to questions about their reasons for doing the course and what influenced them to do the course. This was undertaken to understand what they wanted from these provisions.

Predominant among the reasons graduates gave in the graduate survey for enrolling in their course was to get additional skills for their job. When the percentage for the goal to get a better job or promotion is added to this, then it becomes apparent that over 40 percent of the graduates' goals for undertaking the course was not just to get a job, but to advance within work. Hence, rather than gaining employment the reason to undertake study was career related. Therefore, when considering, individuals' needs, they must go beyond just employment and look towards some career progression.

Table A2.24: Reasons for doing course

Reasons	
To get a job (or own business)	22%
To get extra skills for my job	29%
To get a better job or promotion	15%
To try for a different career	4%
Interest or personal development	12%
Requirement of my job	13%
To get into another course of study	1%

Source: Graduate destination survey (RCIT).

Table A2.25: Reasons for enrolling in course

Reasons		
School leaver	35	(33%)
Upgrade skills	45	(43%)
Returnee	14	(13%)
Unemployed	11	(10%)
Total	**105**	

Table A2.26: What influenced students to do course

Reasons		
Needed a job	13	(12%)
Work skills	38	(35%)
Knowledge of industry	1	(1%)
Qualification	5	(5%)
Upgrade skills	19	(18%)
Required for job	18	(17%)
Other	14	(13%)
Good schedule	1	(1%)
Total	**109**	

The pattern evident in table A2.24 is repeated in table A2.25, with 43 per cent of the students seeking to upgrade their skills, and 14 per cent as returnees also wishing to extend their knowledge. Equally, in table A2.26, the need for up-skilling represents over half of the responses. So, when considering what individuals want from VET provisions, and how these needs are addressed or transformed by other client groups, it is important to recognise that individuals engage in VET for reasons other than merely gaining employment. Rather, they seek other goals such as advancements and career paths. Provisions that fail to address these requirements are not addressing individuals' needs.

Needs of client groups

Summary statements from the data on needs and aspirations are aggregated in table A2.27. These data here are from questions that asked the respondents to identify both their needs and what should be done to address the needs of client groups. The latter question was asked only of community and industry respondents, as other items, presented below, address the needs of enterprises. Informants were also asked what they think constitutes a quality provision of VET. In table A2.27, summary statements from the questions are presented by client groups. As in earlier tables, the respondents advancing or supporting these propositions are indicated in parentheses. To gain some basis for comparison across the client groups, the responses have been delineated into those that refer to 'processes' and those referring to 'outcomes'.

Table A2.28 presents data gathered through the survey of past, current and prospective students. In the left-hand column are the qualities identified by the respondents. The columns to the right provide a count of frequency of the respondents' identification of this quality.

Table A2.27: Needs of client groups

Industry—*Processes*	*Outcomes*
Training that is accessible, flexible and current (I1)	Skilled workers at operator level (I3, I1)
External auditing of training to make it less enterprise-specific (I1)	Getting certification for workers (I1)
Enterprise to negotiate with local providers (I2)	Career pathways for industry workers (I1, I2)
Decision-making by more knowledgeable people (I2)	Safe and productive workforce (I1)
Have providers work in industry more (I2)	Greater participation by small business (I2)
Occupational classification linked to training (I1, I2)	More holistic curriculum (I3)
Creating greater awareness of NTRA (I2)	Maintain public investment (I1)
External assessment (I1)	Programs suiting both small and large business (I2)
Resourcing on-job learning (I2)	Accredited course resulting from industry consultation (I1, I2, I3)
Reliable assessment (I1)	Currency and relevance of course content (I2)
Flexibility in provisions (I2)	Personal development of learners (I2)
External management of course quality (I1)	
Enterprises—*Processes*	*Outcomes*
Continued access to flexible TAFE provision (E1, E5)	Specific, job-ready technical skills (I1, E1, E2, E3)
Greater adaptation to enterprise and individual needs (E4, E1)	Basic personal and organisation skills (E3, E4, E4, E5, E6)
Review and assessment procedures (E1)	Enterprise-specific understandings (I1, E2, E3)
More competition between providers (E1)	Understanding of overall goals (E1)
More involvement with training and capacity to train at enterprise level (E2)	Product knowledge (E3)
'Learning to learn' skills (E5)	Multi-skilling (E5)
Competence of staff (including specific knowledge) (E6)	Currency and relevance of course content (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6)
Interests and motivates staff (E1)	Relevance, applicability and cost-effective course provision (E1, E2, E3, E5, E6)
Positive and supportive teachers (E5)	Addressing individuals' learning needs (E5, E6)
	Improve business outcomes (E1, E2, E3)
	Personal development of learners (E6)
	Improve work performance (E1)
Individuals—*Processes*	*Outcomes*
Self-directed learning (FG2)	Update skills or learn new things (FG1, FG2)
Competence of staff (including specific knowledge) (FG2, FG3)	Certification (FG2)
Content well prepared and presented (FG2)	Prepare for self-employment (FG2)
Positive and supportive teachers (FG3)	Employment (FG1)
Integrated on- and off-job experiences (FG2)	Career (FG1)
	Realise personal goals (FG3)
	Currency and relevance of course content (FG2, FG3)
	Leads to employment (FG2)
Community—*Processes*	*Outcomes*
Consult with community groups (C1)	Enhance small business interest in training (C1)
More individual interaction with teachers (C3)	Enterprises to sponsor more entry-level training (looming skills crisis)
Greater interaction among stakeholders (C2)	Accredited course resulting from industry consultation (C1, C2)
Providers responsive to local needs (C2, C1)	Relevance, applicability and cost-effective course provision (C4)
Flexibility in provisions (C1)	Improve business outcomes (C1)
Integrated on- and off-job experiences (C1)	Leads to employment (C3)
	Supports career (C3)
	Personal development of learners (C4)

Note:
NTRA–national training reform agenda

Table A2.28: Desirable qualities of a VET course

	Past	Current	Prospective
Prospective	5	5	5
Practical skills for the job	6	10	9
Good resources	1	5	2
Choice/flexibility	3	10	4
Accreditation		1	1
Accessible		11	
Interesting		3	4

Industry

Industry needs, in terms of processes, were associated with currency of and flexibility in provisions. Flexibility refers to *access*, addressing the requirements of both small and large enterprises, and *negotiation*, input and decision-making occurring at the local rather than the national level. However, in response to this local decision-making and negotiation, it was suggested that ITABs still identify needs for the industry, and that flexibility at the local level be managed through the use of external auditing to assist with maintenance of national standards and certification. The concern about a failure of front-end regulatory checks to determine the quality of providers, prompted the idea of having external monitoring of students in the form of external examinations, to assist maintaining the quality of outcomes. This was linked to concerns about whether enterprises would have the expertise required to make judgements about the quality of educational provisions. Hence, the issue of reliability in assessment was raised. The use of external monitoring of outcomes from courses was also associated with maintaining validity and reliability in assessment practice, thereby upholding the standing of the certification. The concerns here were particularly focused upon the food processing industry. An industry advocate for this industry made the observation that it was difficult to get adequate funding to this emerging sector, at a time of fiscal restraint. Hence, historical factors were impinging upon the provision for this industry.

The outcomes desired by industry representatives are, at the enterprise level, for skilled workers whose attributes include being flexible, safe, self-directed, personally developed and productive. At the industry level, desired outcomes are accredited courses resulting from industry consultation, improved participation by small businesses, and career paths and certification for industry workers. This includes provisions for enterprises that are small and remote.

Enterprises

Enterprise concerns about processes were related solely to provisions of courses. Access to flexible local provisions, either through TAFE or through developing the capacity within enterprises themselves, were identified as key needs. These provisions ought to focus closely upon enterprise needs, and, moreover, a competitive market should be in place to furnish best value and quality in these provisions. In addition, the capacity to assess workers' progress and evaluate the utility of the programs is also required. The focus upon process also

included a concern that participants would be motivated and interested by what was presented, and learn 'learning to learn' skills. These courses would be implemented by supportive and competent teachers.

The outcomes required by the enterprises are job-ready skills which comprise technical, attitudinal, personal and organisational dimensions, in ways that improve business outcomes—including improved work performance. These outcomes need to be linked intimately to the specific tasks as well as to the overall goals of the enterprise. Hence, the courses would need to be current, relevant, cost-effective and address individuals' needs. This illustrates further the request by enterprises that the two levels of customisation occur in the development of curriculum. Firstly, to make the 'technical skills' tightly linked to their needs, and, secondly, integrating those tasks into the overall provision of the enterprise. An example from the rural centre area was that of the clerical worker who needed product knowledge in order to manage the office while her employer was away working with clients. Hence, the interest in multi-skilling.

Individuals

Individuals' responses from the focus groups included the requirement for competent teachers presenting content that is well prepared in programs that are self-directed (yet have both on- and off-job components); individuals were mainly concerned with outcomes, although self-directed learning was proposed as a need to be addressed. From table A2.28 it is evident that practical skills for the job, choice and flexibility, and good teachers, were qualities most desired by all three types of students. Current students emphasised accessibility of provisions as most central to their needs.

The identified outcomes were mainly employment-related, though with an emphasis upon currency and relevance. However, more than just gaining employment, they focused upon progression, careers and self-employment. So, beyond just employment, these outcomes are about progression within and across enterprises, and self-employment. Pathways to higher positions and the attainments of personal goals reinforce this focus.

Community

The process aims of the community consistently focused upon consultations and interactions among all client groups and between these groups and providers. In addition, the need was expressed for flexible program provisions, in both on- and off-job modes. In addition, the maintenance of national curriculum, held to assist with certification and portability, was acknowledged. The desired outcomes comprised accredited courses that are relevant and current, and focused upon improving business outcomes for enterprises, and employment and career aspirations for individuals. Higher levels of sponsorship of training by small business, and enhanced participation in apprenticeship type arrangements by local enterprises, is also needed.

The industry responses are indicative of their concerns about securing a balance between enterprise needs and the requirements of the industry as a whole, which includes those who work within it. The rigidities they suggest are focused upon maintaining a national presence—and these may well be criticised by others for attempting to maintain their role at a time of reduced funding. However, more importantly, these measures emphasise the need for structures within an environment that is rapidly becoming deregulated and market-driven. There is often commonality in the concerns of communities with those of industry representatives. The need to maintain activities in the longer term, more broadly based than those found within enterprises, are furnished here. Yet there is at the same time acknowledgement of the central role that enterprises play in the health of the community, and that 'industry' would not exist without enterprises. Moreover, there is a common view that enterprises are required to accept responsibilities as well as the benefits of the emerging relationships. Concerns about the quantum and quality of participation are common. The opportunities furnished by enterprises are held to be disappointing—as indicated by the low numbers of individuals completing certificate programs sponsored by enterprises.

Conceptions of expertise

In order to determine the kinds of learning outcomes required for performance in enterprises, representatives were asked to state what it meant to be an expert in their workplace. The purpose behind this question was that, if it is possible to identify what is required of expertise, then the requirements of VET provisions for enterprises can be gauged more closely. The responses have been summarised, and are represented in the format adopted throughout this case study, in table A2.29.

Table A2.29: Expertise from an enterprise perspective

Expertise
Multi-skilled—multi-functional (E1, E6)
Skilled in specific 'technical' tasks (E3, E5, E6)
Interpersonally and organisationally skilled (E1, E2, E4, E6)
Productive (E1, E2, E3)
Understanding processes and product (E2, E4, E6)
Works co-operatively (E2, E4)
Works safely (E2, E5)
Works autonomously (E2, E3)
Adopts wider responsibilities (E4)

The attributes depicted here can be categorised in terms of (i) knowledge types, and (ii) dispositions.

Knowledge types

The requirements to be specifically skilled and multi-skilled—to be able to monitor and respond to problems—demand that workers have rich knowledge bases associated with their vocational activities, comprising propositional and

procedural knowledge at both specific and higher order levels. This knowledge permits not only specific tasks to be undertaken, but also allows workers to apply their knowledge across the workplace in different situations and circumstances. Being broadly skilled is likely to require a wide range of specific knowledge which comes from extended practice in these areas of work. However, to be able to monitor, predict and have a rich understanding of work practice requires deeper forms of propositional knowledge and higher orders of procedures. These forms of knowledge require careful fostering.

Dispositions

Dispositional attributes—including pride in practice, working co-operatively and autonomously, adopting wider responsibilities, and accepting change—are all identified as underpinning expert performance. Although required in different settings, these values are richly associated with the knowledge types. For instance, how something is conceptualised, considered worth doing a decent job upon, etc., emphasises the rich association between dispositions and the knowledge types identified above.

To develop the attributes identified above takes time, practice, access to expertise or guidance, and potentially a structured approach to learning, maximising the prospect of these knowledge types being secured. Combinations of on- and off-job types of VET provisions are likely to be able to secure these forms of knowledge. The on-job experiences provide access to a range of knowledge and guidance in the workplace which can assist the learners' construction of that knowledge. Alternatively, the classroom may be an effective place to secure understandings that are not apparent or accessible in the workplace. One confounding factor is that the goals for performance are likely to be situational, and vary from workplace to workplace. However, it seems that it is difficult to learn broadly transferable knowledge in one setting (e.g. the college classroom), and expect this knowledge to transfer. More likely, knowledge secured richly in one context needs to be abstracted from that context to another. This suggests that extensive learning experiences are required in one context, with assistance being provided in order for the learner to appreciate what is transferable to other circumstances and what level of transfer can reasonably be expected. The issue here is that the forms of knowledge required and identified by the enterprises, as stated above, will not be addressed by curriculum provisions that focus on content alone, nor behavioural outcome-focused measures of performance. If longer-term goals are to be realised for enterprises, individuals and industries, and sustain communities, it is important that wherever the vocational education provisions are enacted they not be dominated by short-term concerns that obliterate the demanding and lifelong task of individuals developing the attributes required for their vocation.

In addition, the existing paradigm for curriculum in vocational education is not able to account for the types of knowledge and dispositions identified here. Consequently, different approaches are required that acknowledge the

importance of the concepts and procedures identified above, and reflects the need to consider these in curriculum and assessment within VET. By focusing curriculum provisions at the workplace level, there is the opportunity to develop further understanding about what is situationally important and what knowledge is more broadly applicable. By being able to identify the variance of the situational factors that underpin expertise, it may well be possible to maximise transfer by indicating to learners the breadth of performance which comprise expertise, rather than one singular and supposedly objective view.

Enterprises' negotiation of curriculum and how partnerships are best formed

Enterprise informants were asked about how best they should negotiate curriculum with providers, and the sorts of qualities that would encourage them to enter into partnerships with providers. The motive for posing this question was to determine whether it is possible to reconcile a number of interests and needs through negotiated arrangements with providers such as TAFE, with these negotiations being founded upon a partnership between provider and enterprise. Such arrangements are held to underpin the maturity of vocational education provisions in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (OECD 1994a). Although there are quite different antecedent conditions in those countries, it is proposed that there is potential in establishing collaborative arrangements based upon mutuality of interests and respect, and that such arrangements can be used to address both the short- and long-term goals of enterprises, industries, and individuals (Billett et al. 1997). Given that collaboration has been identified as something desirable by the community informants, this would seem to address regional needs as well.

Table A2.30 provides tabulated summaries of enterprise responses to these questions. In the left column are the summarised and aggregated responses to the issue of negotiations, and in the right-hand column, those associated with partnerships. The majority of enterprises supported the idea that local negotiations are feasible. Moreover, these are to be directly with providers such as TAFE. One enterprise expressed a dissenting view, stating that it was governed by centralised decision-making on matters associated with training.

Table A2.30: Enterprises' negotiation of curriculum and partnerships with providers

Negotiation of curriculum	Enterprise partnership
Local expert committees (E3)	Understanding our perspective/needs (E2, E6)
Individual negotiation with providers (TAFE) (small business preference) (E1, E2, E3, E5, E6)	Understanding needs of provider and enterprise (E1, E3, E5)
Corporate negotiations (E2)	

The idea of partnerships with enterprises was also seen as being useful if such arrangements could provide timely training, be premised upon an understanding of the enterprises' needs, and maximised the contributions of the enterprises. Three enterprise respondents stressed mutuality of needs in such a partnership; that is, such an arrangement needs to build upon what can be done to maximise

both partners' contribution. This includes an acknowledgement of inhibiting factors (e.g. constraints of shift work, constraints of tiny groups of learners). So, the form of and prospects for partnerships between enterprises and providers is likely to differ across enterprises, with larger enterprises more likely to engage than smaller units. Equally, the two industries selected for this study offer quite different prospects of what is likely across industry sectors. Where you have large numbers of individuals working under the same roof and engaged in similar activities, the prospects are more readily addressed than in places where the tasks performed by employees are quite different from each other.

Increasing investment in training

In order to understand how best to address the issue of the collapsing commitment by enterprises to VET throughout Australia, enterprise informants were asked what would encourage their enterprises to invest more in training. The responses, in table A2.31, illustrate the values that have influenced the current decision by enterprises to participate more in training. The most common response was associated with the organisational change. Other responses were associated with external (legislative changes) or internal (restructuring) demands. Most of the large enterprises suggested that their current efforts addressed the skill development needs, and that only those demands just outlined would encourage them to participate more. However, other enterprises at different stages of development did foreshadow that changes in production processes (new products) and technologies may pre-empt some changes. Yet there was little evidence of a conscious plan to skill for the future, to develop further the skills of workers beyond immediate needs (with one possible exception). The data here seem to confirm other concerns about the role of enterprises in maintaining or developing the nation's workforce. At this time, it seems that enterprise priorities are capricious and inward-focused, and cannot be relied upon alone to furnish the skill base of Australia.

Table A2.31: Factors that would encourage enterprises to invest more in VET

Factors
Organisational change/restructure (E2, E3, E4, E6)
Legislative changes (E2, E4, E5, E6)
Access and availability (E4)
New products (E2, E3)
Shared contribution (E1)
Government subsidies (E3)

Metropolitan region

Introduction

This case study has been written as part of a project that seeks to understand and articulate the needs of the four key clients of vocational education and training, and how these needs are reflected in existing and evolving VET policy and practice. The four client groups of VET are industry, community, enterprises and individuals (Billett et al. 1997). The project aims to understand how the needs of these client groups can best be addressed at a time when the focus upon decision-making within VET is changing. The change is from an 'industry-led' system, which has dominated for the last decade, to an enterprise-focused system. The concern was to consider how best to reconcile the needs and aspirations of all four clients groups in the provisions and curriculum within VET.

The study took place in three Australian regions. The sites selected to provide cases were from regions representing (i) a provincial centre, (ii) a remote rural centre, and (iii) a major metropolitan centre .

The two industry sectors targeted to furnish data from these regions were the food processing and clerical industry sectors. The food processing sector represents one whose involvement within VET is growing, yet remains peripheral to the mainstream vocational education system. The clerical industry has long been the focus of vocational education provisions, which include formal offerings, institutional specialisation and core teaching activities.

The data-gathering focused on three areas of concerns. Firstly, to determine the degree of change from an 'industry-led' provision of VET—with its focus on national uniformity, national core curriculum, and national recognition of skills—to an 'enterprise-focused' provision of VET. And, if so, to understand the likely consequences of such a change. Secondly, to determine the vocational education needs of the four client groups. Thirdly, the project aimed to determine how these needs and aspirations can best be reconciled in the provision of VET. It is held that maturity in a vocational education system is more likely to be realised by addressing mutuality in the needs and interests of all its client groups, rather than allowing domination by just one (Billett et al. 1997).

The data used to construct this case study were drawn from a number of sources.

Firstly, the data gathered for this project focused upon the three concerns just outlined. The data-gathering strategies comprised structured interviews, surveys and focus groups, with subjects representing the views of industry, community, enterprises and individuals. Industry representatives were from ITABs and TAFE curriculum sections, who have responsibility for the 'industry-led' VET provisions in that sector. Essentially, these were spokespersons for government policy who advanced the bi-partite views of industry. Representatives from enterprises came from within the food processing and clerical sectors. Community representatives were those who spoke on behalf of the regions. Individuals comprised prospective, current and past students who both were surveyed and participated in focus groups. The sampling and data-gathering did not seek to be exhaustive or wholly representative. Such a claim would be illusory. Rather, it elicited understandings and ideas from representatives of the two industries, enterprises within those industries, the local community, and individuals who were prospective, existing or past students in courses servicing those industries. The interviews of enterprise and community representatives, focus groups and surveys of students, were undertaken with individuals from the metropolitan region. Industry representatives were from State ITABs and TAFE curriculum officers who have responsibilities for the selected industry sectors.

In presenting the data in this case study, some conventions have been adopted. The respondents themselves remain anonymous. However, as it is important to identify which interests they represent, the responses are designated as community (C), industry (I), enterprise (E) and students (S). For students there is a further delineation into those who were part of a focus group (FG) and those who were the product of a survey (SU). Additional detail is provided about the standing of the informant(s) when appropriate. The data from the interviews and focus groups were transcribed and tabulated, and summaries of this qualitative data are presented in tables. The data from the surveys of prospective, current and past students are also presented in tables within the case study. The respondents to the survey from the metropolitan centre institute of TAFE (MCIT) were predominantly female (75 per cent), full-time (92 per cent), studying wholly at college (94 per cent), under 20 years of age (56 per cent), and likely to be enrolled in an Associate Diploma course.

A second data set is comprised of existing statistical information on the area and students from the region. These comprise ABS data from the 1995 census, documents from local development agencies which draw on their own surveys and specific ABS data, and the 1997 TAFE GDS. The ABS data were used to furnish demographic data about the region. The data from local development agencies were used to indicate measures of economic activity. The GDS survey was managed by the NCVER on behalf of the Australian National Training Authority. The GDS survey is used to present data about students who undertook studies at the MCIT. The graduate surveys, based around each institute, furnish demographic data on graduates, the industries they are likely to be employed in, reasons for attending the course, details of those courses, and a range of data on benefits and satisfaction outcomes. Although not specific to

the two selected industry sectors, the data were useful in determining how the current provisions are perceived to be addressing graduates' needs. The samples are respectably large. However, two limitations of the survey data need to be stated. Firstly, not all graduates responded to the survey, so the data represent respondents only. Secondly, only graduates of courses with a duration of 200 hours were surveyed.

The third data source is comprised of documents provided by local development agencies. These documents furnished information about the region's economic activities and goals for economic development.

The case study is structured as follows:

- Data on the changing relationships of decision-making in VET are presented and discussed.
- Data depicting the current provisions of VET, and how they are perceived by the four client groups, are presented and discussed.
- Data on the ideals, aspirations and needs of the client groups are presented and discussed.

Section 1: Changing relationships

Changes towards an enterprise focus within VET

Subjects representing industry and enterprise perspectives were asked to furnish evidence of any change in the relationship between industry-based provisions of vocational education and those which represent enterprise-based provisions. Subsequently, the subjects were asked about the likely effects of such a shift. Table A3.1 provides aggregated summaries of the evidence from the industry and enterprise informants that such a shift is taking place. In the right column of this table, the client group is identified. In the left column the evidence of a shift is presented, identifying those informants who furnished the evidence. From this table, informants representing both industry and enterprises were in almost universal agreement that the focus for VET provisions is now being directed towards individual enterprises. One clerical enterprise, however, suggested that it was not going to happen (E4).

The industry informants proposed that the evidence for this claim is in terms of the types of provisions which were being enacted currently, the customisation taking place or about to take place—utilising enterprise practice to construct the curriculum—all of which have an enterprise focus (see table A3.1). In addition, it was held that governmental action is reducing the industry influence on ITABs, thereby facilitating the shift to an enterprise-based system. Enterprise informants referred to the quality of negotiations, the mechanisms which were permitting the customisation of their needs being accommodated, and the current focus upon on-the-job training provisions. In addition, the partnership between enterprises and providers was held as evidence of this change. All of this indicates a shift towards, or attempts to address, enterprise needs in a more concerted way. However, there are differences in terms of the two industry sectors. The stranding within the Certificate of Food Processing permitted an

initial addressing of sub-sectoral (enterprise) needs, which was not available in the clerical industry sector. Also, the evidence of large enterprises' negotiation of courses was differentiated. In the food processing sector this negotiation was of the tailoring of modules within the CFP to the needs of the enterprises. In addition, the courses were offered on the job at the enterprises, in ways that best suited their needs. The negotiation in the clerical industry is more problematic because its definition as an industry does not hold. Rather, it is a service sector that addresses the needs of a range of industry sectors. Hence, beliefs about generic skills that are applicable across these sectors appear to underpin the curriculum arrangements. Several respondents from large enterprises—for example, a private hospital (E8) and a local government organisation (E7)—expressed concern over the fact that generic skills were not useful in the context of specialised jobs within their organisations, where individuals were required to have knowledge of unique processes, forms, and terminology to successfully fulfil their duties. In the private hospital environment, for example, clerical staff are often required to know how to process private insurance forms, and/or to have knowledge of medical and insurance terminology. Indeed, among the entire group of enterprise and industry interviewees, there were diverse views about the degree to which, and at what level, there was commonality in clerical work at all. Large enterprises had requirements that courses would address the needs of their enterprise in terms of the application of particular skills, and also become involved in the industry-specific activities (e.g. health service, legal, retail). However, the formal provision of courses was more standardised in this sector than in food processing, and almost universally based in the educational institution.

Table A3.1: Shift to enterprise focus

Industry
On-the-job provisions (I1, I2, I5)
Customisation of training; training packages (I1, I3)
Shift in public provision (I5)
Still retaining an industry influence (I2)
Legislation removing industry influence from ITABs (I4)
Utilise practices of enterprises to help construct curriculum (I3)
Enterprise
Negotiation of course content and outcomes (E1, E2, E7)
Ability to select modules to address needs (I5)
On-the-job provisions reflect shift (E2, E9)
Difficulty of small business to establish relationships with providers not going to happen (E4)
Customisation of training; training packages (E3, E5)
Partnerships between enterprises and providers (E8)

Across the subjects representing views of industry and enterprise there was overall agreement that the focus for VET provisions ought to be directed towards individual enterprises, although there was dissent over just how much enterprise focus had been achieved thus far. From the industry representatives, the evidence for an enterprise focus is reflected in the types of provisions that are currently being enacted, the customisation taking place or about to take place, and the views about variations in provisions (see table A3.1). Enterprise

representatives spoke about the quality of negotiations, the mechanisms that are permitting and inhibiting their needs to be accommodated, and the on-job training provisions. There was no discernible difference between the two industry sectors in terms of expectation and demands (discussed in detail below). However, the stranding of the food industry facilitated enterprise needs to be addressed, and offers the potential for this to be undertaken in ways that also address individuals' goals of certification and portability, and industry concerns with common standards.

Table A3.2 provides summarised statements of issues arising from the shift to an enterprise-focused provision of VET. Issues identified by industry and enterprise informants are shown in the left column. The industry informants' concerns were quite distinct from those of enterprises. The latter focused upon concerns about the specific qualities of enterprise-based provisions, in terms of content and goals, and as a consequence the erosion of national curriculum goals, making vocational programs as minimal as possible and leading to associated problems for certification for employees (table A3.2). Concerns from the clerical sector included the demise of hard-won industry standards through the evolution of enterprise-specific arrangements—although this tended to be more of a problem for industry respondents than for enterprise respondents. Several enterprises (E7, E8, E10), for example, felt that industry standards, while useful for maintaining quality, often led to attaining irrelevant skills—with the result that a lot of training in these enterprises must, by necessity, proceed on the job through either trial and error, or through the 'buddy system' (where new workers team up with more experienced workers to learn the ropes). However, system concerns emerged associated with short-termism in enterprise goals and the potential division of VET provisions into those which can be provided through the public system and those solely accessible within enterprises. Indeed, two clerical enterprises (E9, E10) had computer systems that were so unique that specifically-tailored courses conducted on-site by their own trainers were the only avenues for attaining the appropriate skills to use them.

Table A3.2: Issues arising from enterprise focus

Industry
Erodes the portability of qualifications (I1, I3, I5)
Specificity of content and outcomes (parochial–customisation) (I1, I2, I5)
Erodes national curriculum goals (I1)
Fragments curriculum (I4)
Danger of clerical work returning to lower status (I4)
Breaks down international competitiveness (I4)
Supports minimalist training (I4)
Enterprise
Longer duration (higher award) courses offered through TAFE—shorter courses through enterprises (E2)
Has to be enterprise-driven (E1, E5, E9)
Retain national qualifications (E3, E7)
Common base of skills still required (E3)
Developing enterprise capacity to train (E4)

From the enterprise perspective, the most common concern was with securing a tighter enterprise focus. It was held that the VET system had to be driven by enterprise needs, and that more negotiation was required to address these needs, requiring providers to develop an intimate knowledge of the enterprise, its goals and staff. However, one clerical employer recognised the need for a common base of portable skills. Concerns were raised by others that courses negotiated at the enterprise level had to carry nationally-accepted recognition. That is, these programs should not be so specific as to extinguish the aspirations of their employees. However, this was not a commonly expressed concern. The relationship between providers and enterprises was marked in other ways. Enterprises were held likely to provide shorter duration programs, whereas institutes of TAFE offer longer programs, proposed one clerical sector employer. The development of the capacity for enterprises to offer programs 'in-house' was seen as a role for providers, particularly TAFE. However, not all enterprises wished to manage the training of their employees. They viewed this to be the role of providers such as TAFE, which has the appropriate expertise. In all, enterprises wished to have access to this expertise, albeit to tailor provisions to their needs either through enterprise-based or provider-furnished provisions addressing their specific workplace needs.

In sum, many informants confirmed that a shift was or had occurred from VET provisions addressing primarily industry needs (uniform national curriculum and standards) to addressing those of enterprises (customised arrangements and enterprise-influenced selection of content and intents). This was more directly prevalent in the food processing industry with its strands, employees and emerging demand for VET provisions, than in the clerical sector. It should be emphasised, again, that the majority of food processing courses are offered off-campus, whereas courses for the clerical sector are campus-based, and participants (students) are less likely to be employees. Enterprises in the food industry often have to directly fund their provision. Equally, the strands within the CFP necessitate consideration of particular needs of the enterprise in terms of transforming the generic and strand content of the course. These needs precipitate tailoring of both content and intents (aims, goals and objectives). As the courses for the clerical sector are already in existence and largely offered through a college-based provision, there appears to be less direct demand for tailoring. This could, however, be due to a lack of communication between providers and enterprises employing primarily clerical staff. Respondent E1, for example, states that 'training is too industry-driven—ITABs have too much control over the content of courses, leaving workers with a lot of stuff that is not relevant. Customisation is important for us.' This suggests that the demand may be there, but continuing, for whatever reason, to be unheeded by providers.

Client groups delineated concern arising from the shift to an enterprise focus. Industry informants were concerned about the erosion of national curriculum and certification, as well as about the potential for VET provisions to become too enterprise-specific in terms of content and goals. Understandable from an enterprise perspective, was the requirement for courses to intimately address their needs and be customised accordingly. This posture is most understandable

when the course was funded by the enterprise. However, this was not always the case, particularly in the clerical sector. Yet, it seems that enterprises can demand such customisation from providers in an increasingly competitive VET market, in ways which may or may not be mindful of industry concerns and goals. Enterprises want providers to develop rich and intimate understandings of their needs, and to tailor national prescription to enterprises' own particular needs. However, it would seem that only the largest of enterprises would contemplate such interaction with multiples of providers in a true market sense. In particular, it seems unlikely that providers will be able to provide rich analyses of small businesses' needs in a lean, market-based situation. However, there remains an expectation from small enterprises that their needs ought to be met.

Emerging concerns for other client groups include: (i) the separation of courses into those which were publicly and privately funded, (ii) courses whose participants were likely to be employees or not employed, and (iii) short courses, such as initial preparation, being offered in the workplace, whereas only higher level and longer duration courses being offered through educational institutions. Such divisions erode opportunities for those entering the workforce or engaging in entry-level training, and link employment and preparation at a time of high unemployment and stagnant economic development.

For individuals, this shift means that workplace-based provisions may discriminate against those not in employment, whereas those in employment are more likely only to access provisions customised or selected for the particular workplace. What is proposed here, and in the section below, 'What is', is that enterprises want two levels of customisation. Firstly, the particular content and goals for the program need to address the requirements for vocational practice in the enterprise. Secondly, these activities are also integrated with the particular organisational practice within the enterprise. Such an outcome could be positive for individuals where opportunities for advancement and career development exist—that is, where a specialisation has the potential to address the aspiration and needs of individuals. Alternatively, however, where such progression is not possible, these provisions may inhibit individuals' aspirations and potential. In addition, it was evident that enterprise-based provisions are not allowing individuals to complete certification requirements, thereby inhibiting portability. One food processing enterprise (E5), for example, stated that many of their employees were one module short of gaining a CFP because management refused to fund the final module based on its irrelevance to their workplace.

For the community, this shift may mean that enterprises have more tailored training provisions which directly enhance their productivity. Equally, these provisions may allow access to educational provisions for workers who have never enjoyed such opportunities. Yet concerns for communities include the long-term consequences of such enterprise-specific arrangements—particularly for those who are unemployed—and the ability of workers to deploy their vocational practice when they experience severance from their employer. So there are individual and community issues in these arrangements.

Overall, there was little in the way of overt rejection of addressing mutuality in the needs of all four client groups. However, issues about readiness, sectional interests, legislative imperatives (NSW versus Victoria), the particular requirements of enterprises and the difficulty with consultative processes, were used to detail the complexity of this task. The responses were diverse, but categorisable under three headings: (i) consultation, (ii) sectional interests, and (iii) co-ordination. Summaries of the data containing client perspectives of those identifying with the responses are depicted in table A3.3. In this table, factors which support the ideas under the headings are identified in the left column, with those in the right listing factors perceived likely to inhibit this approach to reconciling needs. The three approaches are discussed in the following sections.

Table A3.3: Perspectives on realising mutuality of need

Consultation—*factors supporting*	**Consultation**—*factors inhibiting*
Being consulted—involved in planning and development (I3, I4, E4, E6, C1, C5)	Enterprise short-termism (C4)
Already happens (I2, I5, E7)	Adequate representation (E1, C1)
Meet all needs (E6)	Loss of less powerful voices (E4, C5)
Local planning important (E1, C5, C6)	Difficulties of collaboration in a market situation (C4)
Benefits in both institutional and workplace provisions (E3, C3)	Securing balance between educational and enterprise needs (E6, C4)
Need to account for individual needs (E1, E10, C3)	Some sectors left out (I5)
Options should be fostered (E3, E10, C3, C6)	Difficult of ascertaining some groups needs (E7)
More feedback on/evaluation of courses (I3)	Difficult to reconcile national and local needs (C6)
Sectional interests—*factors supporting*	**Sectional interests**—*factors inhibiting*
Students don't know what they want (E2)	Students benefit from range of experiences (FG1, FG2)
Enterprise focus provides for students' development (E2, E10)	More required than learning in one context (FG2)
If enterprises prosper so do employees and region (E5)	Too reactive at the moment (C4)
Enterprise can identify needs (I5, E5)	Any sectional interests exclusive (I2)
Training has to relate to enterprise needs (I5, E3, FG1, FG2)	Need to address equity issues (I2, E2, C7)
	Hard to tell whose interests are being served (C1)
Co-ordination—*factors supporting*	**Co-ordination**—*factors inhibiting*
Ill-focused efforts (E2)	Difficulties of collaboration in a market situation (C4)
Local planning important (I5, E2, C6)	Securing balance between educational and enterprise needs (E6, C4)
Students don't know what they want (E2)	
Benefits in institutional and workplace provisions (C3)	
Need to account for individual needs (C3, C7)	
Options should be fostered (E2, E3, C3, C7)	
Representations to advocate and present a case (E2)	

Consultation

Consultative processes that engage with and address the needs of all interested parties were broadly advocated. These processes were proposed as a means of meeting all client groups' needs, and as being able to occur at the regional level. This was held as an important goal, which was in part already happening. One

community respondent (C1), for example, reported that 'round tables' for VET planning had been organised at the regional level, while (C4) confirmed that VET-in-schools is supported in the metropolitan region by committees comprising school, community and enterprise representatives. Moreover, schools in the area have formed into 'clusters', where four or five schools in a district share resources and ideas, and provide support and information for each other. However, concerns were expressed about the adequacy of market-based approaches being used as substitutes for planning yet failing to address local needs. The consultative approach to planning was held to offer the ability for the region to develop a local plan that could include feedback on the quality of course provisions.

However, this approach to planning was also viewed as problematic because of differing needs which may not be readily reconcilable (e.g. short-term and specific enterprise needs versus educational goals) through consultation. It was also held that the process might be dominated by those with the resources available and interest to participate. There was acknowledgement of the difficulty of ascertaining the needs of all the groups. Added to this were concerns that the demands of the market would inhibit fruitful consultations, and that reconciling local and national goals is a difficult task.

The consultative approach enjoys support from industry, community, enterprises and students. Industry and community representatives proposed most of the factors identified as inhibiting this approach.

Sectional interests

Sectional interests, and particularly those of enterprises, were proposed as a means of advancing the needs of all other client groups' interests. The proposal typified in the data was as follows. If enterprises prosper, they will provide employment and career progression for local individuals. Thus the community will prosper, and industry goals for levels of skilfulness will accordingly be addressed (table A3.3). It was proposed that students' needs will be addressed through the provision of rich experiences in the workplace. However, it was also claimed that not all client groups warrant equal legitimacy for inclusion. (Students, for example, may not know what they need to learn.) Benefits in the form of greater interaction between enterprises and educational institutions were also proposed as likely to accrue.

Countering these views were concerns about a lack of diversity in student experiences, and the reactive nature and highly specific focus of VET provisions in the workplace. That is, there were concerns that the full range of needs and requirements of the community and those who lived within it are not likely to be addressed. Enterprise informants and focus groups of informants employed in the food processing industry proposed the sectoral-based approach to address the needs of all client groups, whereas community informants and students (both employed and non-employed) were more likely to identify the shortcomings of this approach. That such arrangements were likely to be inequitable, was a concern advanced by industry, community and enterprise informants.

Co-ordination

The co-ordination of VET provisions was proposed to plan and manage the needs of the four client groups. Informants proposed this approach as the means to address the dangers of an ill-focused and uniform (without options) provision unable to address individual needs. The need to have local planning involving providers was seen as the means that might best identify and draw upon the needs within the region. This process would have a capacity to address both strategic and short-term goals. Such a process could result in a consolidated case to engage in negotiations with State and federal decision-makers and funding bodies.

All four client groups were represented in advocating the co-ordination approach.

So, in sum, the broad-based support for planning VET provisions that address all client groups' needs was apparent. This support was polarised around the processes of best reconciling those needs, and concerns about which voices should be heard, the informed nature of those voices, and mechanisms capable of reducing the differences in interests and the ability of the market to address needs. Opposing this is a market-based stratagem that subordinates planning to an inevitable outcome of market forces and needs within the community.

It seems that if co-ordination and consultation were to be undertaken in ways which managed and balanced the needs and inputs of the client groups, then together they might offer a way of proceeding, given the marketplace and the uneven knowledge of VET across all client groups. However, such a process is only likely to be successful if it takes into account all of the interests, including those most able to contribute (e.g. providers anxious to secure market share and powerful economic or governmental voices). A balance has to be struck, so that a process permitting enterprise needs to be addressed and supported is not hindered by a raft of individualised offerings so idiosyncratic that both individuals' and industry goals are jeopardised. For instance, although the CFP offers flexibility, the non-completion rates of participants is too high for industry goals to be realised. Equally, with clerical work, some content and intents need to be identified that are both generic to the industry (e.g. keyboarding) but accommodating to specific enterprise needs. The likelihood of achieving this balance will not be uniform, and, as the delineation between publicly and privately funded provisions widens, it becomes more difficult to realise.

Having presented and briefly discussed the data on planning, the four groups' views on how vocational educators should best address this changing balance is presented and discussed next.

Roles for and characteristics of vocational educators

Subjects from all client groups were asked about how vocational educators could assist in developing the curriculum provisions that address the needs of the community, enterprises and individuals. The responses were diverse and

plentiful, and are best presented under the heading of the *Roles of vocational educators*, and a subsidiary heading addressing their characteristics. Data on vocational educators' roles warrant further delineation, in order to best categorise the respondents' views. These categories are: (i) consultant, (ii) curriculum developer, (iii) instructor, (iv) advocate and supporter of learners, and (v) policy developer. Table A3.4 presents the summarised data from the interviews and focus groups categorised into subheadings. Respondents who are associated with the items are identified to right of the item.

Table A3.4: Roles of vocational educators

Consultant and educational leader—*dimensions of role*
Negotiating with enterprises (I1, I2)
Identify how you can help (I1, E2, E6)
Knowledgeable in many areas (E1, E7, C1, C5)
Add value to enterprise need analysis (E5)
Understand enterprise perspective (I1, E6, E7)
Provide leadership for community (C6)
Work according to national standards (I4, E1)
Work to make enterprises self-sufficient in training (E5)
Curriculum developer—*dimensions of role*
Determine need of enterprise (I1, C5)
Identifying full range of needs (I4, I5)
Adapting programs to enterprise needs (E7, C5)
Frequent interactions with enterprises to understand needs (I1, I2, E7)
Danger of VEs pushing their own product (I2)
Regular review of curriculum (I3)
Instructor—*dimensions of role*
Good teacher—varied teaching methods and presentation skills (I5, C4, C7, FG1, FG2)
Provide practical instruction and opportunities to practise (E1, C3, C5, FG1, FG2)
Tailoring instructional needs to the workplace (C3)
Be concerned about learning and transfer (I5, C4)
Communicate clearly with students (FG1, FG2)
Expert trainer (E3)
Need more indigenous teachers (C7)
Advocate and supporter of learners—*dimensions of role*
Supporter, mentor and advocate for students (I4, E10, C2, FG1, FG2)
Compassionate about students (I5, C3, C4, FG2)
Motivates students and builds interest (C3, C4, FG1, FG2)
Counsel on pathways (E10, C2, FG2)
Policy developer—*dimensions of role*
Need to be aligned to and inform policy (C1)
Lobby for schools to begin addressing enterprise needs in their VET programs (E1, E2)
Teachers aren't aware of what's going on (E4)

The data from the student survey conducted for this study are depicted in table A3.5. This table indicates the frequency and percentage of responses from past, current and prospective students concerning what they believe should constitute the roles of a vocational educator.

Table A3.5: Roles of vocational educators—student survey

	Past		Current		Prospective	
	Count	(%)	Count	(%)	Count	(%)
Good teacher	6	(35%)	6	(17%)	21	(23%)
Counsellor	1	(6%)	6	(17%)	12	(13%)
Career advisor	-		2	(6%)	7	(8%)
Friend	3	(18%)	8	(22%)	5	(5%)
Other	4	(24%)	7	(19%)	4	(4.%)
Don't know/no answer	3	(18%)	7	(19%)	44	(47%)
Total	**17**		**36**		**93**	

Consultant

It was from industry and enterprise informants, including student focus groups from within an enterprise, that the role of the educator as a consultant to enterprises was identified and supported. This role is about vocational educators negotiating and consulting with enterprises to identify and realise their needs within an industry framework. This role includes demonstrating the utility of the proposed course to the enterprise, and the educator having the ability to add something themselves to the enterprises' training needs and arrangements: adding value. Within this role, the ability to negotiate with enterprises as well as making enterprises self-reliant in addressing their own training needs, was proposed and strongly supported by one enterprise informant. Community informants proposed an educational leadership role in the community. So educational leadership is manifested in two quite different ways: leadership in the community, and an ability to add value to enterprise needs.

Curriculum developer

Informants from industry, community and enterprises proposed that curriculum development is largely about the ability to identify the full range of enterprise needs, and then adapt programs to meet this need. Frequent interactions between educators and enterprises were proposed as a means of securing an understanding of their needs and reviewing how programs are addressing those needs. Concern about losing an industry focus through individualised efforts (provisions) was reported by an industry informant. So this role in developing educational provisions was most legitimated when the focus of determining educational intent, the context of courses and its evaluation was posited at the enterprise level of determination.

Instructor

Industry, community and student informants emphasised the role of being a 'good teacher'—an 'expert trainer'—characterised in terms of teaching methods and presentation skills. The student survey data strongly reflected this sentiment. The ability to furnish opportunities to develop 'practical' skills was emphasised, as was the need to tailor instructional procedures to the exigencies of the workplace. Student groups proposed communicating clearly with

students. Within these aspects of the role was a demand to address students' learning and the transfer of the learnt knowledge. Clerical students in particular (FG2) seem to require a good deal of one-on-one work with teachers. Food processing students (FG1), on the other hand, expressed satisfaction with the expertise of their teachers, and were more concerned with the non-teaching aspects of their course (convenience, schedule information, etc.). In addition, it was held that more indigenous teachers were required to address the needs of indigenous learners.

Advocate and supporter of learners

From the community, industry and student informants was a demand for the educator to be compassionate about students, facilitate their development through support and guidance, and to be a source of motivation. Both food processing and clerical students (FG2), for example, felt that their teachers were not accessible enough outside class times. These students felt a need for support and advice over and above that required or given in the classroom by teachers. Understanding students' needs was extended to an appreciation of their readiness to progress. Being supportive of students extends to providing advice on pathways through educational provisions, and concerns were proposed by enterprise, community and student informants. The survey data endorsed these views, with current and prospective students emphasising the role of teachers as counsellors and career advisors, and all categories of students suggested the teacher's role as a friend was highly valued.

Policy developer

One community informant emphasised the reciprocal relationship between policy development and teachers' practice, emphasising teachers' involvement in formulating policy, but also being guided in their practice by policy. Two enterprises suggested teachers engaged in VET-in-schools programs should make sure that enterprise needs are being met.

Characteristics of vocational educators

In addition to roles for vocational educators, the subjects proposed characteristics concerning how they should conduct themselves. These are as follows:

- content wise (having good industry knowledge, experience, spending time in the workplace)
- expert in the area
- flexible
- communicator
- add value to work
- practical in approach
- professional in approach

The shift to an enterprise-based provision of vocational education was evident in the responses to the roles of vocational educators. In particular, the determination of curriculum intents (aims, goals, and objectives) was seen, by necessity, to reflect enterprise requirements. However, the different interests of the client groups are reflected here. Even where there was an apparently common view (e.g. the role of an instructor), the intent differs. Enterprises viewed the role of instruction as teaching the things the enterprise needs in ways that address the participants' needs. The students' responses support the former in terms of relevance, rather than enterprise-specific learning, but the latter in the same way as the enterprises. Students strongly expressed the need for teachers to act as advocates (see table 3.5), a role not always easily reconcilable with the roles of consultant and curriculum developer as proposed by enterprises.

Curriculum development was seen as situating curriculum at the enterprise level, albeit adapting industry prescriptions to enterprise needs. Such an approach is analogous to the school-based curriculum movement (e.g. Skilbeck 1984), although determination of intents is focused upon only two sets of interests. The implementation of curriculum (instruction) was seen as a process of good teaching to realise the goals set by enterprises. Addressing learners' needs was very much in terms of their ability to achieve that which had been set for them by industry and enterprise. Consideration of individuals' aspirations is very restricted here, other than the provision of advice about which of the given educational or career pathways were most appropriate.

The concern here is about the robustness of knowledge and the potential for transfer. Current views suggest that ideas about generic competencies fail to define or permit transfer (Stevenson 1996; Beven 1997). Nor ought it be assumed that transferable knowledge can be secured in either the classroom or the workplace, without enriching the learning experiences situated in either of these settings. This may be achieved by making accessible the knowledge likely to transfer, and then advancing prospects for transfer through a consideration of the application of that knowledge to other circumstances. Such instructional interventions require planning, an appreciation of the formulation of educational intents and processes, careful implementation by the teacher, and solid engagement by the learners. All of these are unlikely to be secured by workplace practitioners who are unaware of these requirements or inexperienced in the application of techniques associated with maximising transfer (Billett 1996).

In the shift to an enterprise focus, the data above set out a significant change in vocational educators' roles. Throughout the last decade of industry domination of the curriculum processes, teachers have been valued as 'implementers,' whose role was to implement with uniformity what was determined by others. Now, the demands articulated here refer to being an adapter, designer and researcher (to use Marland's categories cited in Print [1987]). It is unclear, after over a decade of efforts to secure subservience to industry mandations, how readily vocational educators will be able to shift to the new roles required of them in ways that secure educational goals for all client groups.

Perspectives on community service obligations

Community and industry representatives were asked what they understood by the term 'community service obligations' and also about their relationship to the market. These data were gathered to gauge whether the key role in the public provision of vocational education—to promote wide access and support those who might be disadvantaged in the labour market—still has currency with these client groups. The importance of gaining insights into this issue, and others below, was not just to appraise changing views but also to understand the perspectives of these views. If, for instance, one view is to predominate, it is important to critically appraise this view. Equally, as new views begin to have their impact (e.g. enterprise, community), it is important to understand what perspective their views carry. Moreover, it was necessary to understand the degree to which these voices are 'informed.' The two issues addressed here are, firstly, perceptions of what should comprise community service obligations, and, secondly, what relationship is proposed between these obligations and the pressures of the market. The data summarised in table A3.6a represent the views of industry and community informants, under subheadings that state the conceptions of CSO, and how these were positioned in relation to the market (see table A3.6b). To the right of the responses under these subheadings are identified the subjects who proposed and support these items.

Table A3.6: Conceptions of community service obligations

Industry obligation with work practice (C1)
Addressing disadvantage—access and equity—underachievers (I2, I3, I4, I5, C1, C3, C6, C7)
Up-skill workforce (I3, C1)
Continuance of enterprise more important than CSOs (I1)
All education/training is fundamentally a CSO (C4)
Communicate information about VET within the community (C5)

Table A3.6b: Balance between market and CSO

Legislation required to counter market excesses (I4)
Market proposes flexibility but also creates instability and disadvantage (e.g. small business and remote communities) (I5, C3)
Pursuit of market goals may result in the neglect of local need (I3, I5, C7)
For VET to be viable it has to engage the market (I2)
Programs would not be viable without public funding (VET-in-schools)
Service industry needs but still be accessible (C5)
Adult and community education is a better place to address equity needs (C6)
Public funding of access programs within a market system (I2)
Sacrifice of quality when market drives VET (I1)

The responses varied from those who provided interpretations that carried with them particular sets of values, to those that interpreted the concept in a particular way. Of the former, statements included those about the importance of access and equity, that all VET is a CSO, and that the success of enterprises was more important than CSOs. Particular interpretations, for instance, referred to industry obligations in the workplace—emphasising the need for safe

working practice in the food processing industry, the up-skilling of the workforce, and communicating about VET in the community. The range of responses was indicative of a concept that has a particular meaning, seen as being central to the public provision of vocational education in the past. Some of these interpretations suggested that, as a wider range of interests are brought to play in decision-making within VET, existing values are likely to come under challenge—but that the views of particular interests may seek to transform key values and priorities for vocational education.

The question about appropriate balance between CSOs and the market elicited responses that noted both concerns about and support for the market. Industry informants proposed the need for legislation to address market excesses, the failure of the market to deliver flexibility, and concerns about a longer-term view than can be realised through market-based approaches. Respondents expressed concerns about local needs being neglected, the need for partnerships, and the need for public funding to keep programs viable. Those supportive of the market approach emphasised that private sector success underwrites the provision of CSO, and that the CSO provisions could be delivered through a market-based approach. One community informant suggested that the adult and community education (ACE) sector could address CSOs. Other ways to secure clients' needs may well serve the region far better. Certainly, the data below on the performance of the TAFE institute cast doubts on easy criticisms of the TAFE provision.

Changing relationships

There is firm evidence that relationships informing decision-making within VET are changing. Within those relationships, which perceive a new emphasis on enterprises, conceptions of how the planning for and practice within VET curriculum is being transformed. Beyond expectations of teachers' practice are transformations in the way curriculum intents are to be negotiated and implemented. The enterprise view of curriculum planning reflects particular sectoral interests, presumably, at least in part, at a cost to others. The needs of other client groups are not always readily or easily aligned with these particular interests. Concerns about specificity and the reactive nature of the enterprise focus were raised in reference to the likely impact of a planning approach that denies other voices. Equally, the roles and expectations of vocational educators are not always easily reconciled between the demands of enterprises and those, for instance, of students. Even community interests, which are often aligned with enterprise requirements, do not always sit comfortably with all of their perspectives. However, enterprise funding of their own VET provisions adds legitimacy to their demands for customised training. Coincidentally, market considerations are making provisions such as those offered by TAFE reactive, perhaps rather than being responsive. All this suggests that in different ways the decision-making within VET provisions and curriculum is being transformed by factors associated with the market. The concern is whether these are in the best interests of all client groups.

So, approaches to reconciling all these needs are likely to be problematic. In order to appraise more fully how these concerns might be progressed, the next section furnishes an array of data reflecting the current state of vocational education provisions in the region at a general level, and then specifically for the food processing and clerical sectors. This is to be used as a basis to consider in the fourth section, 'What should be', the ideals of the four client groups in trying to fashion responses that seek to reconcile and address the needs of these four groups.

Section 2: 'What is'

Individuals

The data on individuals' participation in the VET system at the MCIT are of two kinds: (i) that derived from the graduate survey which is general in kind, and (ii) that from the surveys and focus groups administered specifically for this project. The first is global data drawn from graduates of the MCIT who responded to the graduate survey, a nationally funded study of the satisfaction with TAFE provisions. The second set of data is from enterprise, industry and student respondents associated with the clerical and food processing industries, and representatives from the metropolitan centre community. The data on individuals are organised under the headings of *Profile of participants, Modes of study* and *Satisfaction with course*. All of the data will ultimately be compared across the three regional sites being accessed in this project. In particular, much of the analysis of the GDS will be reserved for the cross-regional study. It is presented here to inform this case study.

Profile of participants

From the graduate survey, a profile of the TAFE students in the metropolitan region can be constructed. This profile comprises information about the students, their positions within the industries in which they are employed, and their reasons for doing the course, as well as satisfaction with the course.

As stated in table A3.7, the graduates from the metropolitan institute were generally in their thirties: older, on average, than their State and national counterparts. A lower percentage of women graduated from MCIT than in the State as a whole, but higher than the national percentage. Students with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background were less likely to have graduated here than throughout the State, although were on par with national levels. Conversely, graduates from a non-English speaking background are considerably more frequent here than across the States or the nation. Students with disabilities are similar to national and State levels. Students were less likely to be unemployed when they commenced their course than their State counterparts, but more likely than those nationally. In terms of country of birth, graduates from the two institutes were considerably less likely to be born in Australia than their State counterparts or nationally. Consequently, they were considerably more likely to be born in a non-English speaking country than their counterparts at the State or national level.

This profile suggest an older cohort of students, typically female, not necessarily Australian born or English speaking, who were quite likely to be employed when they commenced their studies. There appears to be little difference between the participation of students in paid work while they studied, and students across the two States or nationally. Equally, it seems that the graduates were no more likely to be undertaking the course part time than their counterparts elsewhere (NCVER 1997).

Table A3.7: Demographic and equity access groups

	MCIT	State	Australia
Median age for graduates	32	31	28
Women graduates	57%	60%	56%
Graduates from ATSI background	1%	3%	1%
Graduates from NESB	44%	26%	32%
With disability	6%	7%	6%
Unemployed prior to commencing course	20%	22%	18%
Country of birth			
Australia	448 (55%)	4099 (73%)	44 766 (74%)
Other countries (NESB)	298 (37%)	984 (18%)	11 668 (19%)

Note: 815 graduates from MCIT.
Source: Graduate destination survey (MCIT).

The data concerning graduate employment within industry and their occupational status are used in cross-regional comparisons. However, the industries reflect a service orientation, and the occupational groups are, at least in part, characterised by higher level occupational outcomes.

Table A3.8: Industries in which graduates were most likely to have employment at 30/5/97

Most	Second most	Third most
21% Health and community services	15% Retail	10% Accommodation, cafés

Source: Graduate destination survey (MCIT).

Table A3.9: Most common occupational groups for graduates employed at 30/5/97

Most	Second most	Third most
27% Salespersons and personal services	22% Para-professional	12% Professionals

Note: Occupations based on Australian Standards Classification of Occupation codes.
Source: Graduate destination survey (MCIT).

Graduates and employment

The graduates from MCIT reported lower than national and State percentages for employment, as depicted in table A3.10. Consequently, graduates also reported higher percentages of unemployment than the State or national average. In terms of graduates who were unemployed prior to commencing their TAFE course, MCIT had a lower level than the State or national average. Equally, graduates who undertook their study to gain employment were at a lower level than both State and national percentages.

Table A3.10: Summary data

	MCIT	State	Australia
Graduates employed	61%	67%	71%
Graduates unemployed	20%	19%	15%
Graduates unemployed before commencing their TAFE course, found work by 30/5/97	36%	41%	46%
Graduates who gave their main reason for doing the course as 'to get a job (or own business)', employed by 30/5/97	49%	57%	61%

Source: Graduate destination survey (MCIT).

Modes

The Associate Diploma level award was the most common at this institute, as indicated in table A3.11. The most common, and average, time taken to complete these awards was 11 months and 17 months, respectively. The most commonly reported means of delivery was, 'classes at college', at 82 per cent. Again, these data will be useful in drawing comparisons across the three regions.

Table A3.11: Course details

Course details	MCIT
Most common qualification	Associate Diploma
Most common time (and mean time) to complete course	11 months (17 months)
Percentage completing course within 2 years	70
Main method of delivery	Classes at college (82%)

Source: Graduate destination survey (MCIT).

Satisfaction

Tables A3.12 to A3.14 report graduates' measures of satisfaction. Overall, these measures are reported in very positive terms. In particular, measures that are attributable to the activities and performance of the institutions and teachers, are generally reportedly very positively. Significantly, those factors that had less than State or national average levels of performance are attributable to factors outside of the direct influence of educators or the educational institutions.

Table A3.12: Satisfaction outcomes

	MCIT	State	Australia
Graduates who cited vocational reasons as their main purpose for doing the course	74%	79%	77%
Graduates who claimed they achieved, or partly achieved, their reasons for doing the course	77%	77%	78%
Graduates who did the course for vocational reasons, and who felt they had experienced improvements in remuneration, promotion or desired job	62%	59%	64%
Graduates whose main reason for taking the course was vocational, and who were employed and thought the course was either relevant or somewhat relevant	77%	77%	79%
Graduates who rated the course eight or more out of ten	60%	70%	68%

Source: Graduate destination survey (MCIT).

Table A3.12 depicts data on five satisfaction measures associated with the outcomes of courses. Graduates' measures of having achieved their goals were lower than State and national levels. The measures of realising advancements in the workplace were higher than State levels but lower than national levels. Measures of relevance were for both institutes more or less consistent with national or State levels. However, levels of graduates who rated their courses at eight or more out of ten were lower than both State and national levels. These data suggest that in the areas where the institutes could exert most leverage—the quality of courses for students—they were not regarded as positively as the State and national averages. This is also reinforced by the data presented in table A3.14.

These overall positive measures are also evident in table A3.13. Perhaps most noteworthy are the low levels of graduates who claimed they have received none of the benefits outlined above. Also noteworthy is the difference of the global measures between full- and part-time students. The positive measures of relevance are also contrary to the perceptions of some enterprise informants. They have stated in a number of places in this case study that the performance of TAFE and its teachers, and in particular the relevance of what they teach, is questionable. The data in this table will be most useful in cross-regional comparisons.

Table A3.13: Benefits and outcomes

Benefits	**Full-time**	**(Part-time)**
Increase in earnings	37%	(22%)
A promotion	22%	(13%)
Change of job/new job	29%	(29%)
Any of the above benefits	62%	(45%)
None of above benefits	37%	(54%)
Occupation most likely to receive increase in income	Para-professional	(41%)
Occupation least likely to receive increase in income	Labourer	(17%)
Relevance of the course		
Graduates' belief course was of high or some relevance to their job	77%	
Graduates' belief course was of very little or no relevance to their job	19%	

In table A3.14, the data are presented on the ratings of 11 aspects of the courses in which the graduates were enrolled. In the left-hand column are the items. In the two columns to their right are the percentages for both ratings. The percentage without brackets is for a rating of eight to ten, and those in brackets for ratings of four to seven. The highest grades are for the teachers' knowledge and the overall quality of the course. Areas less positively appraised are associated with advice and information on courses and jobs. Three measures go below 50 per cent on a rating of eight to ten.

Table A3.14: Ratings of aspects of courses

Items and rating	MCIT	
	rated 8–10	(rated 4–7)
Your instructor's knowledge of course content	72%	(25%)
Overall quality of course	60%	(38%)
Convenience of venue and class times	57%	(38%)
Making assessment methods clear	59%	(36%)
Presentation of course material	52%	(43%)
Usefulness of course to job	54%	(36%)
Content reflecting industry practice	54%	(38%)
Quality of equipment	48%	(44%)
Balance between instruction and practice	50%	(45%)
Information received when choosing course, subjects and modules	43%	(47%)
Information about careers and jobs available	36%	(45%)

These measures of satisfaction from graduates highlight the aggregated perceptions of graduates. What they indicate is that graduates view course provisions as well organised, their teachers knowledgeable and the courses relevant. Ratings that are not as high as others, or do not compare favourably with State or national factors, are not directly attributable to the institutes' responsibilities. So, overall, the graduates who responded to the GDS supported the quality of the TAFE provisions offered through the MCIT. That is, one client group (individuals) have expressed reasonably high levels of satisfaction at the way the VET provisions offered through TAFE institutes have addressed their needs.

Measures of satisfaction were also elicited in the interviews and focus groups conducted for this project. Below, summaries of data from all four client groups are presented and discussed.

Client groups' satisfaction with VET provisions

Informants from all four client groups were asked to indicate what VET provisions existed, and how these addressed or failed to address their needs. Table A3.15 provides summaries of these data. In the left-hand column, summaries of data display how VET provisions are addressing the needs of industry, enterprises, regions and individuals, drawing upon informants from each of those groups. The particular summary statement is followed by the identity of the respondent. The right column follows the same format, providing summaries of ways in which these provisions are failing to address the client groups' needs.

Table A3.15: Satisfaction with VET provisions

Addressing needs of industry	Not addressing needs of industry
Operator level courses flexible, varied and accessible (I3, I4, I5)	Enterprises not getting enough customisation (I5)
Able to address enterprises' needs (I3, I4)	Teachers' technical expertise is lacking (I5)
Meeting needs well (I2, I3, I4, I5)	Non-completion of food certificate (I2)
Only meeting immediate needs (I1)	Non-alignment between VET and industry (I4)
	Most courses are pre-vocational—limited up-skilling options (I5)
	Courses do not address the needs of beginners (I3)
	Lack of underpinning knowledge (I3)
	Failure of quality control (I1)
	Funding for food processing training tied to completion of higher levels (I3)
Addressing needs of enterprises	**Not addressing needs of enterprises**
Basic skills learnt at TAFE (E1, E2, E3, E4, E8)	Adapting to enterprise needs varied in success (E4)
Content adapted to enterprise needs (E5)	Not enough customisation to enterprise needs (E5)
Up-skilling opportunities with enterprise and individuals' contributing (E10)	Lack of genuine options for training (E6)
TAFE flexible with provisions (E1)	Unavailability of specific provisions (E2, E6, E10)
Useful integration of off- and on-job components (E8)	Need to access individual modules (I2)
Tailored to meet the needs of the organisation (E2, E4)	Current funding does not allow small enterprises to engage in training (I5)
On-job provision most important because of specificity of tasks (E2, E9)	Does not fail (E7)
Adequate provision (E2)	
Accredited nationally and portable (E5)	
Incentive funding to subsidise training (E1)	
Training done internally for specificity of skills/knowledge required (E9, E10)	
Addressing needs of region	**Not addressing needs of region**
Well served by educational institutions (C3, C5, C7)	Not enough VET courses in schools (C1, C3)
Overall the quality of courses good (C1, C3, C5, C6)	Level of courses often not low enough to provide access (C6)
Growth of private providers (C4)	Not enough accessibility (C5)
Traineeships allow greater access (C4)	Not enough indigenous teachers (C7)
	Not enough workplace training available (C2)
	Lack of co-ordination of VET in schools (C2)
	Differentials in training among industries (C4)
	Not enough promotion of VET in the community (C5)
Addressing needs of individuals	**Not addressing needs of individuals**
Access to courses in the workplace (FG1, FG2)	Organising work placements caused concern (FG2)
Certification (FG1, FG2)	Level of study not always appropriate (FG2)
Group learning supported and supportive (FG1, FG2)	Content repeated—not integrated into work activities (FG1)
Options available (FG2)	Students are not taught how to learn (I1)
Improves confidence and skills (FG2)	Lack of information for choosing modules (FG2)
Integration with workplace activities (FG2)	

Industry

Industry informants emphasised the way that the current provisions are being offered to meet enterprise needs through flexibility in access. In particular, strands in the food processing provisions permit relevance in course provisions. However, there was a concern that the measures were reactive and only meeting immediate needs.

Ways in which current VET provisions were failing to meet industry needs were stated as: not enough enterprise customisation, and the difficulty of addressing small and remote businesses. One informant questioned teachers' technical expertise. There were also concerns from the clerical sector about the emphasis on pre-vocational rather than more advanced courses. Concerns included the priority given to learning in workplace-based provisions and the high incidence of non-completion of the Certificate of Food Processing, because enterprises only sponsored those modules they thought essential. Hence, it was suggested that funding should be linked to completion of certificates. There were also concerns about the organisation and quality control of the industry provisions. It was held that the 'front-end' regulatory arrangements were being eroded by the market leaving the quality control provisions open. Linked to this was the belief that minimal training provisions were being enacted in the workplaces, not allowing development of the theoretical knowledge required by workers.

So, in all, the industry representatives proposed how individual and enterprise needs were being addressed effectively. Concerns about structures of courses (an industry responsibility) and the inadequacy of work-based provisions, in addressing individuals as well as enterprise needs, were also advanced and supported. Again, more customisation was called for, and solutions to provisions for enterprises that are small and/or remote.

Enterprises

Food processing enterprise representatives acknowledged the role of TAFE in entry-level training, and the way that enterprise needs had been accommodated within customised curricula. The flexibility of TAFE was acknowledged. In addition, respondents proposed the value of both on- and off-job experiences. The focus upon on-job provisions was emphasised, as was the need to develop training capacity in the workplace. Overall, the adequacy of the dual responsibilities and provisions, and the certification that was forthcoming, were proposed as addressing enterprise needs.

Conversely, informants held that enterprise customisation had not yet gone far enough. As with industry respondents, there were concerns about provisions focused upon the workplace. Here, they were about adequacy of options and enterprise-specific programs. So, the focus of many of the concerns was upon inadequacies in the provision of VET tailored to the needs of enterprises, particularly small business, and its employees. The most common shortcoming was the degree of customisation or tailoring that enterprises believed should occur. In situations where the impression was of a genuine effort at working

together, there was strong support and respect: 'It doesn't fail' (E7). The point was that the level of criticism of TAFE provisions was not always supported by the evidence being proffered.

Overall, some enterprises were satisfied with the provisions while others were not. It seems that the dissatisfaction was over degree, rather than the ability and willingness of current VET provisions to address enterprise needs. Interestingly, each of the enterprises demanding more customisation had at one point praised the flexibility, existing customisation and adequacy of the current provisions. This usually referred to courses provided by TAFE, albeit through facilitated processes of support and distance provisions.

Regions

The informants for the region expressed satisfaction with the educational provisions and the breadth of the provisions available. This included particular needs, such as those of migrants. The overall view from these informants was that the needs of the enterprises and individuals of the region were being catered for well.

Concerns raised by these community informants were associated with resourcing to make VET provisions accessible to students, those with special needs, and the possible diversion of resources into large companies or overseas ventures. Some of the concerns were structural. One community respondent (C4), for example, claimed that there are structural attributes within the food processing industry that inhibit funded training, making workers take up to a 20 per cent cut in wages to fund training. There were also concerns about the lack of VET-in-schools provisions and their co-ordination. The access to provisions, the integration of on- and off-job experiences, and the differences between provisions across industry, were all structural concerns raised by community respondents. Several community respondents, for example, noted an access problem to clerical training for full-time workers, who faced a dearth of night courses in their required subjects. The lack of indigenous teachers and the promotion of VET in the community were seen as inhibiting interactions with the regional community.

So, many of the concerns of the region did not question the adequacy of the existing VET provision. Instead, they were concerned about resourcing, the access to and co-ordination of VET, willingness of enterprises to participate fully, and the impact of competition policy (including VET-in-schools) on the region, as much as criticisms of the adequacy of TAFE or its teachers.

Individuals

Student informants in the focus groups provided data about the quality of provisions (access, flexibility, attendance patterns, options, integration of experiences) and outcomes (transferable skills, confidence and skills, certification). Tables A3.16 to A3.18 provide data from the survey of past, present and current students engaged in food processing and clerical studies.

The format for each of the tables is the same. In the left-hand column is the item the students volunteered, and across the three right-hand columns are the frequencies with which students referred to these items. Table A3.16 aggregates the responses to how the teaching and learning arrangements addressed the students' needs. Tables A3.17 and A3.18 respectively refer to how the teaching and learning arrangements did not address their needs, and how the course failed to address their work goals. These data are used to augment the data from the focus groups provided in table A3.15.

Students valued the access to workplace practice organised through TAFE, the certification and transferability of knowledge they learnt in the college provision. The group learning approach was seen to address some students' needs. The most common response from the on-campus respondents was the convenience of the mode of study. This referred to the flexibility in timetabling to address the needs of the students (e.g. family and work commitments). Links between on- and off-job components featured strongly in the students' perceptions of the current provisions. The student surveys indicate the convenience of the TAFE provisions, the utility of self-paced approaches, class size and the judgement from past students that the provisions were in line with expectations. In responding to how the course had failed or was failing to address needs, a number of subjects from each category stated that the provisions had not failed them.

Concerns include the level of initial work, the need to pre-test to give credit for existing learning, and lack of information about choice of modules. Concerns from campus-based students were associated with the need for longer periods of preparation and reinforcement of basic skills, the relevance of some material, and accessing teacher time. Of these, the concerns by past students about relevance are noteworthy. The single highest response was to criticise the relevance of the college component to the workplace. Significantly, in both tables A3.17 and A3.18, when asked how the arrangements had failed to address their needs, students responded (some with the highest frequencies) that the provisions had not failed to address their needs.

Table A3.16: Appropriateness of teaching and learning arrangements

Item	Past	Current	Prospective
Self-paced		2	
In line with expectations	10		
Appropriate level			
Good teacher support	1		
Challenging	2		
Convenient		17	43
Class size		2	3

Table A3.17: How teaching and learning arrangements had not addressed needs

	Past	Current	Prospective
None	3	4	50
Not enough attention from teacher	2	2	5
Not enough time	2	5	3
Schedule/timetabling	1	6	4
Motivation	1	2	4
Relevance		4	

Table A3.18: How course fails to address work goals and location

	Past	Current	Prospective
Does not fail	2	7	37
Repeated content from school		3	1
Relevance		5	5
Wanted to go to university		2	2
Lacked relevance to workplace	8		
Level too basic	1		2

So, at least some of the needs of enterprises and individuals are being met, albeit in different ways. Enterprise needs were met through the tailoring of provisions and being responsive. Although there is some dissent from this view, it is one of degree, with all enterprises expressing support for the provisions they have been able to access. Students have, in a number of ways, expressed satisfaction in their provisions—although both graduates in the GDS and past students surveyed here expressed concern about relevance. This is potentially linked to concerns about the integration of college and work-based experiences. Many of the concerns of industry are about the erosion of national prescription, and the lack of quality control through a market-based approach. The view from industry is that the purchasers (enterprises) may not be informed, and are drawn to make decisions on a cost-only basis. With the erosion of 'front-end' regulatory arrangements which providers had to submit themselves to, there is concern that this deregulation will lead to a dilution of standards of instruction and assessment, as well as to the erosion of national training provisions which have been the product of exhaustive consultation. Small businesses remain a problem. They are usually least well placed to address their own needs, and not in a strong position to negotiate with providers. So there is a dichotomy between small and large enterprises, in terms of training provisions that rely on market-based provisions.

The community appears to believe that the educational provisions are adequate in a general way, but require more integration, planning, co-ordination and close interaction with the regional community. For instance, the call for more indigenous teachers exemplifies this.

So what arrangements are in place for planning? Below, the current regional planning is identified and discussed.

Regional planning

The informants from all groups were asked how the planning for VET was addressing the needs of enterprises, individuals and regions. The responses were not plentiful, although different perspectives emerged from the data. Table A3.19 presents these data under headings that categorise the responses from the informants by client group. Three themes emerge:

1. Market-based approaches have removed the need for planning. It was held that direct consultation with enterprises and the development of enterprise-based provisions had removed the need for planning.
2. Planning was not occurring. This view was supported by the concern that the competitive environment inhibits the prospect for collaborative planning, as the providers, who possess much of the important knowledge about VET, are in competition with each other. Moreover, individuals representing the student perspective are not represented on planning forums. Equally, it is claimed that the industry advisory boards are not representative of enterprises.
3. Planning is occurring informally, and has potential to go further, through TAFE and agencies such as the ITABs, school regional planning, and development agencies. There seemed to be a number of planning options available and operating. Perhaps being in the State capital means such mechanisms are available. However, small business claims to be ignored in these arrangements.

Table A3.19: Planning at a regional level

Region
Planning not occurring (I5)
Regional consultation agencies (e.g. RDB) (C2, C3, C4, C7)
TAFEs informal links (I4)
Schools' regional management committees (C1)
Regional focus not appropriate model for food processing (I2)
Teacher networks (C2)
VET round tables (C4)
ITABs consult with industry and community (C5)
Enterprises
Planning replaced by enterprise-specific training provisions (I2)
Need more human resource management planning to address low literacy levels (I2)
Small business has no influence (I5)
Individuals
Structure in place addressing lifelong learning (I2)
Industry
Domination by providers in the decision-making process (I4)
Planning for industry through union representation (I4)

Note:
round tables–refers to a local consultative committee comprised of local business people, providers of training and those concerned with employment sourcing.

Arising from these views are concerns that, if enterprise needs are being addressed through the marketplace, this obviates the need for planning. Such a view posits enterprise needs as being the only ones worthy of consideration. In addition, the idea that market provisions remove the need for planning fails to address important strategic goals for vocational education. For example, one community respondent (C1) noted that local enterprises are aware that the downturn in apprentice numbers will likely see a shortage of skilled labour in the not too distant future. However, this situation has not encouraged these enterprises to employ additional apprentices. Rather, they believe that government will do something as this event occurs. Interestingly, in this region there is little movement in the mature population. Consequently, investment in an apprentice here would seem to be a reasonably safe proposition. Even so, the view is that apprenticeship numbers are declining.

So, it seems that existing planning is largely formal (e.g. ITABs) with other informal planning taking place as well (teacher networks). However, the concerns of enterprises (and particularly small enterprises) and individuals are not being considered. The needs of enterprises (large) are held to be fulfilled through the market rather than through planning.

Lifelong learning

The concept of lifelong learning has recently become part of government policy rhetoric. Lifelong learning used to be associated with individuals' personal development throughout their life. Now it has come to mean individuals' needs to maintain the currency of their skills throughout their life, preferably at their own expense (Billett et al. 1997). Such a shift in the conceptualisation of this term captures the kinds of transformations taking place in public policy in Western countries. Here, it is useful to determine the degree to which views of lifelong learning have been transformed, and to gauge the ways available provisions permit individuals to maintain currency and progression. Consequently, subjects representing enterprise, industry and community perspectives were asked firstly what they thought the term meant. Then they were asked how this provision was being addressed in current VET provisions.

As with views about planning, the data in table A3.20 depict the views of the client groups that have had, and, seemingly, are likely to continue to have, great influence over VET provisions in the future.

Three interpretations emerged from analysis of the responses. Firstly, the view that lifelong learning referred to 'meeting ongoing skill development needs' and to the 'ability to meet changing goals' was supported by enterprise and industry respondents. Secondly, it was proposed by industry, enterprise and community representatives that 'individuals learn throughout their lives anyway'. Thirdly, industry and community representatives proposed the need for continual training and upgrading of qualifications. So, it was the enterprise and industry respondents who proposed the economic viewpoint as an outcome of, and goal for, lifelong learning. Community representatives, as well as enterprises and industry representatives, advanced learning as a continual process.

Table A3.20: Meaning of lifelong learning

Meaning
Meeting ongoing skill development needs (I2, I3, I4, E1, E7, E9, C3)
Part of ongoing change process everyday life (I5, E1, E2, E5, E6, E7, C5)
Continuous learning for individual—we learn all the time (I4, E3, E4, E8, E10, C2, C3, C6)
Ability to meet changing goals—keeping up (I3, E2, C1, C2)
Continual training/upgrading qualifications (I1, C1)
Career paths (C5)
Continual access to education/training for all (C4, C7)

Table A3.21 presents collated summaries of the data from the respondents about the measures in place for skills maintenance and development to occur through individuals' lives. These responses can be categorised into *provisions*, *values* and *concerns*.

Table A3.21: How lifelong learning is being addressed

Method
Combination of formal and informal learning is best (C2)
Through RPL (I3)
Not addressing how to learn (I1)
Formalised structures (courses, qualifications, AQF) (I4, E8, C1, C3, C5)
Access to modules (not certificates) (E2, E5, C6)
Developing a training culture (E8, C3)
Formalised structures do not reflect career progression (C4)
Mandatory appraisal/in-service processes (I2, E7)
Personal development (E1, E2)
Provision of opportunities (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7, E9, E10, C3)
Own expense (C4)
Provisions not always available (E5, E6, C6)
Access for illiterate groups and mature aged students (C7)
Lifelong learning is built into the curriculum (I1)
Competency standards allow contextualisation and transferability (I2)
Constant revision of standards (I4)
Food processing curriculum does not directly address lifelong learning (I5)
Re-skilling process (E3, E4)

Provisions

Representatives of all three groups proposed the existence of formal educational structures, their revision and development. Added to this were the suggested strategies of RPL, self-directed learning, combinations of on- and off-job provisions, mandated enterprise-based processes, competency standards and the development of training cultures within enterprises. VET provisions, which had built in lifelong learning arrangements, were proposed by an industry informant.

Values

The values underpinning how lifelong provisions should be realised are of three kinds. These are: (i) the provision of opportunities, (ii) mandated staff appraisals, to be undertaken at the individuals' own expense, and (iii) up-skilling. These values are, with one exception, those proposed by enterprises. Even the

response for personal development was furnished with an interest to develop the interpersonal skills required for the workplace.

Concerns

The concerns expressed by respondents referred to the inability of formal structures (qualifications and formalised courses) to reflect individuals' career progression, a lack of emphasis on 'learning to learn' skills, provisions not being available, and a concern that access to modules rather than complete courses was happening. These concerns were advanced by community and industry informants. The last two concerns relate particularly to the food processing sector where the availability of modules is at the employer's discretion. Those modules deemed not to be required by the enterprise are not always available to employees. A case in point is the enterprise E5, mentioned earlier, which refused to fund the final module in a site-based *certificate* course for economic reasons. This situation has led to a concern about the low numbers of individuals actually completing the Certificate of Food Processing, compared with those who have completed modules. The concern here is that an enterprise-focused approach may inhibit, or make impossible, access to ongoing opportunities for advancement. If employment is a requirement to progress in courses, there will inevitably be inequities and barriers to individuals' progression.

The issues of the failure of the formal provisions to address career path needs is noteworthy. One of the community respondents stated that these arrangements did not address the needs of the individuals' career paths (C4). It seems, then, that the economic basis for decisions about which courses to offer workers is focused upon short-term rather than long-term goals.

The data presented above, and discussions about the findings, have indicated different patterns in the way current VET provisions are addressing the needs of the client groups. Strong support from graduates about the quality of TAFE provisions is reflected in the views of some enterprise, community, industry and student informants. It is clear that an orthodoxy is emerging, focused on enterprise-specific arrangements. Even a community representative with an interest in provisions for migrants was framing responses in terms of enterprise and economic utility. It seems that only when VET provisions for migrants addressed enterprise needs as well were they deemed wholly legitimate.

However, concerns about this shift were evident in how planning for VET should best progress, how teachers' roles should be perceived, and in provisions for the ongoing career progression of individuals within the region.

Having presented data and discussed the current situation, the next section addresses views about 'What should be'. That is, what the aspirations and needs of all four groups are.

Section 3: 'What should be'

Data were gathered in order to determine how each of the client groups' needs, interests and aspirations can best be addressed. From this, an attempt will be

made in the report to provide a pathway between what currently occurs and what should happen to address each client group's needs in a changing environment within vocational education. From the heading entitled Changing relationships, it is evident that a shift is occurring, or has occurred, towards an enterprise-focused approach to vocational education. This is probably more so in the food processing industry, which has more direct links between enterprises and providers than in the clerical field. However, if the practice in the former sector is illustrative of likely changes in the future, it is important to consider how best other needs can be addressed. As has been shown in the previous section, many of the changes to an enterprise-based approach are premised upon moves to impose market principles and practices into vocational education. Constraints brought about by a vocational education system that is seeking to manage shifts in its funding base, and to rely more heavily upon the contributions of both enterprises and individuals, are allied to this move. As has been foreshadowed above, there is an orthodoxy that is developing to accommodate these changes. However, unless the strategic needs of each industry, the developmental needs of regions and individuals' aspirations are addressed—as well as those of enterprises—it is unlikely that the VET system will adequately fulfil its role within the community.

Therefore, it is important to determine what each of the four client groups wants from the VET system. In order to be informed about these wants, the informants were asked to identify their needs and their aspirations in the form of ideals and views about what constitutes a quality VET provision. In addition, enterprise informants were asked about what it means to be an expert in their workplace, in order to determine the goals for vocational education programs, how best they should negotiate curriculum and engage in partnerships with providers, and what would encourage them to invest more in VET. The following section presents and discusses the responses to these questions.

Reasons for doing courses

Individuals' reasons for doing courses, and what they want from courses, were sought from students. Two sources are referred to here: the graduate destination survey, and the specific surveys of past, current and prospective students in either food processing or clerical studies conducted for this project. Table A3.22 reports data from the GDS, whereas tables A3.23 and A3.24 report the students' aggregated responses to questions about their reasons for doing the course and what influenced them to do the course. This was undertaken better to understand what they wanted from these provisions.

Differences in reasons for graduates' undertaking of courses were evident between the two institutes, as depicted in table A3.22. The responses from the graduate survey are divided between gaining employment (to get a job or become self-employed), comprising 33 per cent, and developing further vocational options (extra skills, better job/promotion, different career), which together also comprise 33 per cent of the responses. The remaining responses are about the requirements of existing work, securing personal goals, with another

11 per cent doing the course in order to access other tertiary education. Hence, rather than just gaining employment, the reasons for undertaking study were associated with personal advancement, furthering existing vocational knowledge, changing careers and seeking advancement in the workplace. Therefore, when considering individuals' needs, they must go beyond just employment, and look towards some career progression.

Table A3.22: Reasons for doing course

Reasons	
To get a job (or own business)	33%
To get extra skills for my job	13%
To get a better job or promotion	9%
To try for a different career	11%
For interest or personal development	11%
Requirement of job	8%
To get into another course of study	11%

Source: Graduate destination survey (MCIT).

Table A3.23: Reasons for enrolling in course

Reasons		
School leaver	81	(59%)
Upgrade skills	24	(17%)
Returnee	18	(12%)
Unemployed	32	(22%)
Total	**155**	

Table A3.24: What influenced students to do course

Reasons		
Needed a job	9	(6%)
Work skills	63	(43%)
Upgrade OP score	14	(10%)
Knowledge of industry	10	(7%)
Qualification	6	(4%)
Upgrade skills	20	(14%)
Required for job	1	(0.5%)
Other	21	(14%)
Good schedule	1	(0.5%)
Total	**146**	

Note:
OP–overall position—a statewide comparative measure of student performance on completion of year 12.

The pattern evident in table A3.22 is repeated in table A3.23, with 17 per cent of the students seeking to upgrade their skills, and 12 per cent as returnees also wishing to extend their knowledge. However, the majority of the sample were school leavers. These students have career goals and are selective about courses on that basis. In table A3.24, the need for work skills predominates, with over 60 per cent of the responses. Significantly, however, 10 per cent of the students here are seeking the very specific goal of enhancing their prospects of gaining a place

in higher education. So when considering what individuals want from VET provisions, and how these needs are addressed or transformed by other client groups, it is important to recognise that individuals engage in VET for reasons other than merely gaining employment. Provisions that fail to address these other requirements are not addressing individuals' needs.

Needs of client groups

Summary statements from the data on the needs and aspirations of each client group are aggregated in table A3.25. The data here are from respondents identifying (i) their needs, and (ii) what should be done to address the needs of client groups. The latter question was asked only of community and industry respondents, as other items, presented below, address the needs of enterprises. In table A3.25, summary statements from the questions are presented by client groups. As in earlier tables, the respondents advancing or supporting these propositions are indicated in parentheses. To gain some basis for comparison across the client groups, the responses have been delineated into those referring to 'processes' and those referring to 'outcomes'.

Table A3.25: Needs of client groups

Industry—*Process*	*Outcomes*
External auditing of training to make it less enterprise specific (I2)	Flexible and self-directed workforce (e.g. initiative) (I2, I5)
Greater participation by small business (I1)	Getting certification for workers (I2)
ITABs identify needs (I2)	Career pathways for industry workers (I2, I3)
Maintain a high level of skill development (I3)	Programs suiting both small and large business (I1)
Concentration of food processing training at lower levels (I2)	VET that equips us for export markets (I5)
Shift to data management needs to be recognised in curriculum planning (I1)	Training to create skilled workers at a higher level in clerical (I4)
Enterprises	*Outcomes*
	Specific job-ready technical skills (E1, E3, E4, E6, E7, E8, E9)
	Basic personal and organisation skills (E6, E7, E8)
	Understanding of overall goals (E2)
	Theoretical knowledge (E2)
	Improve literacy and numeracy skills (E3, E10)
	Development of supervisory skills (E5, E7)
Individuals	*Outcomes*
	Certification (FG1, FG2)
	Employment (FG1, FG2)
	Career (FG1)
Community—*Process*	*Outcomes*
Consult with community groups (C1, C5, C6)	Schools need to see VET as just another pathway, not inferior to university (C2, C3)
Greater interaction among stakeholders (C1, C3)	Should be tied to work outcomes (C6)
Providers responsive to local needs (C5)	
Maintain links with national curriculum (C3)	
Schools to be able to design own courses (C1)	
Addresses diverse cultural needs (C7)	

Table A3.26 presents the data gathered through the survey of past, current and prospective students. In the left-hand column are the qualities identified by the respondents. The columns to the right provide a frequency count of the respondents' identification of this quality.

Table A3.26: Desirable qualities of a VET course

	Past	Current	Prospective
Good teachers		5	15
Practical skills for the job	9	10	17
Good resources	3	5	9
Choice/flexibility	1	3	4
Accreditation			2
Accessible			
Interesting		1	1

Industry

Industry needs, in terms of processes, were quite tightly focused upon the management of provisions and the level of participation to maintain skill levels. Addressing the requirements of both small and large enterprises—with negotiation, input and decision-making occurring at the local level—was held to be a key goal. However, in response to this local decision-making and negotiation, it was suggested that ITABs still identify needs for the industry, and that flexibility at the local level be managed through the use of external auditing to assist with maintenance of national standards and certification.

The outcomes desired by industry representatives are, at the enterprise level, for skilled workers whose attributes included being flexible, safe, self-directed and productive. At the industry level, desired outcomes included improved participation by small businesses, career paths and certification for industry workers, and—at least for one respondent—to be focused upon the skilfulness for export quality products.

Enterprises

Enterprise concerns were confined to outcomes. These included individuals with job-ready skills comprising technical, attitudinal, personal, supervisory and organisational dimensions, which permit an understanding of the goals required for overall performance of the enterprise. This includes the theoretical knowledge required for workplace performance. These outcomes need to be intimately linked to the specific tasks as well as the overall goals of the enterprises.

Individuals

The individuals' responses from the focus groups were solely concerned with outcomes. However, the data from the students' surveys presented in table A3.26 indicate that practical skills for the job, good teachers, good resources, and choice and flexibility were qualities most desired by the students.

Outcomes were mainly employment-related. More than just gaining employment, they focused upon progression, careers and self-employment. These outcomes were about progression within and across enterprises and self-employment. Pathways to higher positions and the attainments of personal goals such as gaining entry into higher education reinforced this focus.

Community

The process aims of the community consistently focused upon consultations and interactions *among* all client groups and *between* these groups and providers, in ways that reflect the diversity of cultural needs. In addition, the need for maintenance of national curriculum to assist with certification and portability were acknowledged, as was involvement in VET as a legitimate activity for high schools. The desired outcomes comprised higher levels of sponsorship of training by small business, and enhanced participation in apprenticeship arrangements by local enterprises.

The industry responses are indicative of their concerns about securing a balance between enterprise needs and the requirements of the industry as a whole, which includes those who work within it. The rigidities they suggest are focused upon maintaining a national presence, and these may well be criticised by others for attempts at maintaining their role. More importantly, however, these measures emphasise the need for structures within an environment which is rapidly becoming deregulated and market-driven. There is often commonality in the concerns of communities with those of industry representatives. The need to maintain activities in the longer term—more broadly based than those found within enterprises—are furnished here. Yet there is, at the same time, acknowledgement of both the central role that enterprises play in the health of the community, and the fact that industry would not exist without enterprises. Moreover, there is a common view that enterprises are required to accept responsibilities, as well as enjoying the benefits, of the emerging focus within VET. Concerns about the quantum and quality of participation are common. The number of opportunities furnished by enterprises is held to be disappointing—especially considering the low numbers of individuals who are able to graduate from programs which individual enterprises are sponsoring and selecting the material to be undertaken.

Quality of provision

Informants from all four client groups were asked what constitutes a quality provision of VET from their perspective. The data are presented in summarised forms, acknowledging which subjects advanced and supported the ideas. As in other tables, the subjects' affiliation is acknowledged in parentheses in table A3.27. In order to analyse these responses, they are delineated into those referring to 'processes' and to 'content'.

Table A3.27: A quality VET provision

Processes
Accredited course resulting from industry consultation (I2, I5, E2)
Currency and relevance of course content (E4, E5, E6, FG1, FG2)
Reliable assessment (E1)
Relevance, applicability and cost-effective course provision (I4, E2, E6, E9, C5, C6, FG1)
Competence of staff (including specific knowledge) (I3, C1, FG1)
Addressing individuals' learning needs (I5, E3, C1, C4, FG2)
Content well prepared and presented (FG1, FG2)
Improve business outcomes (E7)
Measurable outcomes (E10, C1, C3)
Leads to employment (FG2)
Adds value to enterprise (E6)
Personal development of learners (E1, C7)
Positive and supportive teachers (C7)
Flexibility in provisions (C7)
Content
Ongoing review of curriculum to ensure quality (I1, I3, I4)
On-the-job delivery (I2, I4, E3)
A high level of positive outcomes for individuals (I5)
Appropriate role models (C7, FG2)
Base program on learners' needs, not vice versa (C5, FG2)
Have to know what your objectives are (E5)
Availability of specialisation (E1)
Accessible (C2, C4, C6, C7)
Strategic alliances between providers and enterprises (I2, C2)
Encourage individuals to go on with their studies (I3)
Upholding the national training system and competency standards (I5, E8, C3)

Conceptions of expertise

In order to determine the kinds of learning outcomes required for performance in enterprises, representatives were asked to state what it meant to be an expert in their workplace. The purpose behind this question was to determine whether it is possible to identify what is required of expertise—then the requirements of VET provisions for enterprises can be gauged more closely. The responses have been summarised, and are represented in the format adopted throughout this case study, in table A3.28.

Table A3.28: Expertise from an enterprise perspective

Expertise
Multi-skilled—multi-functional (E2, E3, E5, E8, E10)
Skilled in specific technical tasks (E1, E4, E6, E9)
Interpersonally and organisationally skilled (E1, E2, E6, E10)
Predicting and fixing up problems (E5)
Understanding processes and product (monitoring) (E3, E6, E10)
Working co-operatively (E1, E2)
Supervisory and management skills (E4)
No need for experts—competence is all that is required (E7)

The attributes summarised here can be categorised into (i) *knowledge types* and (ii) d*ispositions*.

Knowledge types

The requirements to be specifically skilled and multi-skilled, to supervise and manage, to be able to monitor and respond to problems, demand that workers have rich knowledge bases associated with their vocational activities, comprising propositional and procedural knowledge at both specific and higher order levels. This knowledge is what permits not only specific tasks to be undertaken in the workplace, but also workers to apply their knowledge across the workplace in different situations and circumstances. For example, being broadly skilled is likely to require a wide range of specific knowledge which comes from extended practice in these areas of work. However, to be able to monitor, predict and have a rich understanding of work practice, requires deeper forms of propositional knowledge, and higher orders of procedures. So, understanding the principles of vocational practice, and how they are applied in different situations and circumstances, is an important goal. These forms of knowledge require careful fostering.

Dispositions

Dispositional attributes, including pride in practice, working co-operatively and acceptance of change, are all identified as underpinning expert performance. Although required in different ways across different settings, these values are richly associated with the knowledge types. For instance, how something is conceptualised, considered worth doing a decent job upon, etc., emphasises the rich association between dispositions and the knowledge types identified above.

To develop the first two sets of attributes identified above takes time, practice, access to expertise or guidance, and, potentially, a structured approach to learning capable of maximising the prospect of those knowledge types being secured. Combinations of on- and off-job types of VET provisions are likely to be able to secure these forms of knowledge. The on-job experiences provide access to a range of knowledge and guidance in the workplace which can assist the learners' construction of that knowledge. Alternatively, the classroom may be an effective place to secure understandings that are not apparent or accessible in the workplace. One confounding factor is that the goals for performance are likely to be situational, and to vary from workplace to workplace. However, it seems that it is difficult to learn broadly transferable knowledge in one setting (e.g. the college classroom), and expect that this knowledge will transfer. More likely, knowledge secured richly in one context needs to be abstracted from that context to another. This suggests that extensive experiences are required in one context, with assistance being provided in order for the learner to appreciate what is transferable to other circumstances and what level of transfer can reasonably be expected. The issue here is that the forms of knowledge required and identified by the enterprises, as stated above, will not be addressed by curriculum provisions that focus on content alone, nor behavioural outcome-focused measures of performance. If longer-term goals are to be realised for enterprises, individuals and industries—and sustain communities—it is important that wherever the vocational education provisions are enacted they

not be dominated by short-term concerns that obliterate the demanding and lifelong task of individuals developing the attributes required for their vocation.

In addition, the existing paradigm for curriculum in vocational education is not able to account for the types of knowledge and dispositions identified here. Consequently, different approaches are required that acknowledge the importance of the concepts and procedures identified above, and reflect the need to consider these in curriculum and assessment within VET. By focusing curriculum provisions at the workplace level, there is the opportunity to develop further understanding about what is situationally important, and what knowledge is more broadly applicable. By being able to identify the variance of the situational factors that underpin expertise, it may well be possible to maximise transfer by indicating to learners the breadth of performance that comprise expertise, rather than one singular and supposedly objective view.

Enterprises negotiation of curriculum and how partnerships are best formed

Enterprise informants were asked about how best they should negotiate curriculum with providers, and the sorts of qualities that would encourage them to enter into partnerships with providers. The motive for posing this question was to determine whether it is possible to reconcile a number of interests and needs through negotiated arrangements with providers such as TAFE, with these negotiations being founded upon a partnership between provider and enterprise. Such arrangements are held to underpin the maturity of vocational education provisions in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (OECD 1994). Although there are quite different antecedent conditions in those countries, it is proposed that there is potential in establishing collaborative arrangements based on mutuality of interests and respect, and that such arrangements can be used to address both the short- and long-term goals of enterprises, industry and individuals (Billett et al. 1997). Given that collaboration has been identified as something desirable by the community informants, this would seem to address regional needs as well.

Table A3.29 provides tabulated summaries of enterprise responses to these questions. In the left-hand column are the summarised and aggregated responses to the issue of negotiations, and in the right-hand column, those associated with partnerships.

Table A3.29: Enterprises' negotiations of curriculum and partnerships with providers

Negotiation of curriculum	Enterprise partnership
Individual negotiation with providers (TAFE) (small business preference) (E2, E3, E5, E6)	Timely meeting of our needs (E2)
Corporate negotiations (E4, E7, E8)	Understanding our perspective/needs (E1, E2, E3, E7, E8)
	Understanding needs of provider and enterprise (E4, E6)
	Tailored curriculum, flexible access (E1, E2, E4, E5, E8)
	Already have a partnership (E1, E2, E3)

The majority of enterprises supported the idea that local negotiations are feasible. Moreover, these are to be made directly with providers such as TAFE. Dissenting views include those from an enterprise that was governed by centralised (head office) decision-making on matters associated with training. Another enterprise suggested that these decisions were likely to be associated with internal planning and purchasing, which may sit uneasily with negotiated arrangements.

The idea of partnerships with enterprises was also seen as being useful if such arrangements could provide timely training, tailored curriculum and flexible access—all premised upon understanding enterprise needs, and maximising the contributions of the enterprise. Three enterprises reported having such partnerships. Five enterprise respondents stressed mutuality of needs in such a partnership—that is, such an arrangement needs to build upon what can be done to maximise both partners' contribution. This includes an acknowledgement of inhibiting factors (e.g. constraints of shift work, constraints of tiny groups of learners).

So the form of, and prospects for, partnerships between enterprises and providers is likely to differ across enterprises, with larger enterprises more likely to engage than smaller units. Equally, the two industries selected for this study offer quite different prospects of what is likely across industry sectors. Where you have large numbers of individuals working under the same roof engaged in similar activities, the prospects are more readily addressed than in those where tasks performed by employees are quite different from each other. Sitting within this is the difficulty for partnerships with small businesses. Again, the scale of enterprises is likely to influence the type of relations with the VET system. It seems more likely that larger enterprises will be comparatively well-placed in forming partnerships with providers.

Increasing investment in training

In order to understand how best to address the issue of the collapsing commitment by enterprises to VET throughout Australia, enterprise informants were asked what would encourage their enterprises to invest more in training. The responses in table A3.30 illustrate the values that currently influence the decision by enterprises to participate more in training. The most common response was associated with furnishing evidence that it would enhance productivity. Other responses were associated with external (legislative changes) or internal (restructuring) demands. Most of the large enterprises suggested that their current efforts addressed the skill development needs of the workforce, and that only the demands just outlined would encourage them to participate more. However, other enterprises at different stages of development did foreshadow that changes in production processes and technologies may pre-empt some changes. Yet there was little evidence of a conscious plan to skill for the future, to develop the skills of workers beyond immediate needs (with one possible exception). The data here seem to confirm other concerns about the role of enterprises in maintaining or developing the nation's workforce. These

include the downturn in enterprise commitment to sponsoring apprenticeships, and their preference for short-term entry-level training options such as traineeships. At this time, it seems that enterprise priorities are capricious and inward-focused, and cannot be relied upon alone to furnish the skill base of Australia.

Table A3.30: Factors that would encourage enterprises to invest more in VET

Factors
Organisational change/restructure (E3, E6, E10)
Legislative changes (E3, E4)
Already invest a lot in training (E1, E4, E5, E7, E8, E9)
More time and resources (E6)

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